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Slaves of Society

A Play in
Three Acts





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SLAVES *of* SOCIETY

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

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Characters

MR. HUNTON—An aspirant for a diplomatic position.

BERNARD BAYLOR—A young man, secretly engaged to Winifred.

GRADY LEACH—Brother of Winifred, and son of Mrs. Hunton by a former husband.

COUNT CAVEER—A foreigner introduced through the diplomatic set.

BARON VANDERSTEIN—A foreigner introduced through the diplomatic set.

LAWRENCE—Family butler of the Huntons.

POLICEMAN.

MRS. HUNTON—Second wife of Mr. Hunton, and mother of Grady and Winifred Leach.

LAURA HUNTON—Daughter of Mr. Hunton by a former wife.

WINIFRED LEACH—Sister of Grady, and daughter of Mrs. Hunton by a former husband.

BARONESS VANDERSTEIN—Wife of Baron Vanderstein.

FRITZY—A maid servant of the Huntons.

Argument

ACT. I.—Winifred, in love with Bernard, together with Laura and Grady, are inclined to resent Mrs. Hunton's desire to have them associate so much with foreigners—The Count and Baron, talking together, justify the young people's estimate of them—They flatter Mrs. Hunton—Mr. Hunton argues against them with Laura, and with Mrs. Hunton, who is possessed by an ambition for social leadership, a diplomatic appointment for her husband, and a brilliant match for Winifred—The Count asks Winifred to take an evening ride in his automobile, as an afterthought including in the invitation the Baron and Baroness—Bernard persuades Winifred to refuse—Her mother forces her to accept—Grady, who has had too much champagne, insults the Count and Baron; and Bernard, learning of Winifred's acceptance, leaves the house evidently offended.

ACT II.—Bernard, induced, under a misapprehension, to play cards for money, withdraws from the game, and finds that Laura approves of his action—In giving his reasons, he says that he has charge of money, and, lest the circumstances should be misunderstood, he must let his employers know them—Grady, who has a similar business situation, supposes Bernard to mean that he himself (Grady) is to be exposed, and they quarrel—Bernard leaves—Mr. Hunton rebukes his wife for tempting Bernard to risk his business situation—She speaks against Bernard, and tells of the Count's offer of marriage to Winifred—Mr. Hunton argues against him—There is a disturbance in the card-room—Grady has seen the Baroness cheating, and the Baron, to cover it, has accused Grady of cheating—Mrs. Hunton apparently smoothes the matter over, but the Baron, Baroness and Count leave—Then Mrs. Hunton and Winifred berate the others for their lack of courtesy, appreciation, ambition, etc.—In her excitement, Mrs. Hunton refers with depreciation to Bernard and his family—Bernard, returning to show to Mr. Hunton, as he had promised, but forgotten, a letter from the President to his father, enters and overhears. The letter, which Mr. Hunton reads, nominates Bernard's father Assistant Secretary of State, to have charge of making and examining recommendations for consular and diplomatic appointments. Therefore he only can now fulfil Mrs. Hunton's ambition.

ACT III.—Winifred has married the Count, lost her health, and left him, after losing most of her fortune—Mrs. Hunton and Grady have lost so much in play that, in connection with a financial crisis, their means are now limited—No diplomatic appointment has come, and Mr. Hunton questions whether the family have any longer the standing and fortune necessary in order to receive it—Bernard, as a logical conclusion of the events of the play, proposes to Laura—She does not accept, but gets him to meet Winifred—Winifred and Mrs. Hunton presume upon a divorce and Bernard's former love—A policeman finds Winifred in a compromising situation with Bernard—Bernard suggests that she is Laura whom he "intends to marry"—The policeman reports Grady's arrest, and need of bail—Bernard says the family should not appear in the matter, and wishes he had the money—Winifred takes money, collected for a special purpose, that is in Laura's pocket-book that happens to be on the table—Bernard recognizes the pocket-book—This fact and what Bernard has said of marrying Laura makes Winifred suspicious and leads to an outburst against all, but mainly against herself and her mother, which ends in a heart-attack, and to her being taken from the room by Laura—Bernard returns from trying to arrange for Grady's bail, and gradually divulges to Mr. and Mrs. Hunton that Grady has killed a man in a gambling quarrel and shot himself—Mrs. Hunton leaves the room, requesting no one to follow her—Laura enters with the news that Winifred is dead—A pistol-shot is heard—Mrs. Hunton, finding Winifred dead, has shot herself—In her sorrow Laura turns to Bernard.

SLAVES OF SOCIETY

ACT I.

SCENE: *This is the same throughout the play, and represents the library in the home of the Huntons, at Washington, D. C. At the Back Center is a mantelpiece over a fireplace. Beside the mantelpiece, is an electric button. In the room are book-shelves, chairs, a sofa, and a center table, on which are books, magazines, paper, an inkstand, with pens, etc.*

Entrances from the hall, evidently communicating with the front door, at the Right Center; from the smoking-room and the servants' quarters, at the Right Second; from the hall, evidently communicating with a ball-room and a card-room, at the Left Center; and from the dining-room, evidently communicating with bedrooms and other parts of the house, at the Left Second.

As the curtain rises, it is evening, and the lamps are lighted. All the characters, except the servants, are in evening costume. Now and then, strains of music, as if played for dancing, are heard in the distance.

Enter—Left Center—WINIFRED, BERNARD, LAURA AND GRADY.

WINIFRED. If this were the only kind of life that I could live, I should die.

BERNARD. Of what?

WINIFRED. Of heart-failure.

BERNARD. Why so?

WINIFRED. Gives nothing for the heart to live on.

LAURA. I hope you will never do that, Winifred. What would Bernard do without you?

WINIFRED. Take up with you.

GRADY. Which, as long as I was alive (*speaking to LAURA*), I should never permit, should I?

WINIFRED. Perhaps, by that time, you would be where your permission would not be asked.

GRADY. Where is that?

WINIFRED. Gone over to the enemy—or what Laura considers so.

GRADY. You mean to the foreigners?

WINIFRED. Yes.

GRADY. Oh pshaw!

WINIFRED. You ask Laura. She thinks you are spending most of your time now in taking off the habits that suit your own character, in order to put on those that suit theirs.

GRADY. Did you say that, Laura?

LAURA. Something of the kind, I believe; but not very seriously. Winifred is making too much of it.

GRADY. I hope so—is not very flattering to hint that one is giving up his own character. He might as well commit suicide and done with it.

BERNARD. The trouble is that one may do that metaphorically, and yet continue to live.

LAURA. Yes; and oblige others to live with him.

WINIFRED. You are not very flattering to mother.

BERNARD. Why not?

WINIFRED. That is apparently exactly what she wants—to have us appear to have characters like these foreigners.

BERNARD. Why so?

WINIFRED. So that we can show that we know what is what.

BERNARD. And what *is* what?

WINIFRED. I don't know.

BERNARD. I hope that you never will.

WINIFRED. It has something to do with breadth of culture, and knowledge of city-life.

LAURA. For my part, I should like to leave here, and get more knowledge of country-life.

BERNARD. Leave here? Not very flattering to me! I have to live in the city.

GRADY. Oh, my dear boy, you don't count.

BERNARD. When I do, you will not recognize it, because I write count in front of my name.

LAURA. I can recognize a count without that.

BERNARD. How?

LAURA. By noticing how one's own traits are counted up—like those of remnants on a bargain counter.

GRADY. You oughtn't to blame anybody for the mere result of his surroundings. Most of those that he associates with look as if they were that and nothing else—remnants!

BERNARD. How do you know how they look?

GRADY. By looking.

BERNARD. You can't see them.

GRADY. Why not?

BERNARD. Covered with paint.

GRADY. For my part, I see too much of some of them.

BERNARD. I wasn't talking of that part, but of their faces.

LAURA. Strange that a sensible woman shouldn't recognize that anyone can see through paint.

BERNARD. You mean can *not* see through it. That is the trouble. It makes everybody wonder what there is there which might be seen, but is not, because it needs to be covered up.

WINIFRED. I fail to understand why a woman should be blamed for making herself look beautiful.

BERNARD. Say beautiful and good. Only good people blush, you know. A little rouge can make one seem to be blushing all the time.

GRADY. And so prepare her for all the emergencies of good society!

*Enter—Left Center—*MRS. HUNTON.

MRS. HUNTON—You young people ought not to be out here. You ought to be in the other room there entertaining the company—especially you girls.

(The two girls start to join her. She points toward the Left Second.) Better go around that way. Then, possibly, no one will notice that you have been absent.

*Exeunt—Left Second—*WINIFRED, LAURA, AND MRS. HUNTON.

GRADY *(to BERNARD)*. I suppose we ought to follow.

BERNARD. Is what men have to do who go into society,—follow the women.

*Enter—Right Second—*FRITZY *carrying a tray containing glasses. The two young men notice her, but do not speak to her.*

*Exit—Left Second—*FRITZY.

GRADY. Did you sample the punch—awfully good!

BERNARD. I suppose so—was afraid of it, myself.

GRADY. Too strong, you think?

BERNARD. Clear champagne, not so?

GRADY. One must drink something on a hot night like this.

BERNARD. But you can't get away from a hot time outside by getting up a hot time inside.

*Exeunt—Left Second—*GRADY and BERNARD.

*Enter—Left Center—*The COUNT and the BARON.

*Enter—Left Second—*FRITZY *with nothing in her hands.*

The COUNT stops FRITZY, takes her hand and kisses it, and places his other hand on her waist. She resents his action, and tries to get away. He holds her hand until he has taken a coin from his vest-pocket which he presents to her. She flings it on the floor and

*Exit—Right Second—*FRITZY.

COUNT *(taking the coin from the floor)*. Zis vill do for ze nex time and zen *(kissing his fingers in the direction taken by FRITZY)*.

BARON. Ist very pooty, very pooty.

COUNT. Oui, oui, Monsieur, but zare be ozers, zare be ozers. You ever zee in Paris, ze belle Marie, premiere danseuse ze Theatre Chatelet?

BARON. You know her, eh?

CAVEER. Ah, mon Dieu, know!

BARON. But ven man muss ein veib habe—

CAVEER. Ah, precisement, muss, muss, always muss. If vun vill get ze house, ze picture, ze silk, ze gold, uh, vun muss always take ze voman.

BARON (*looking around*). Ist mooch gelt here?

COUNT (*gesturing to indicate gathering in*). Oh, mon Dieu!

BARON. Vich vone?

CAVEER. Ze leetle vone. Come sur de papa.

BARON. Ist vat you say—orphan?

CAVEER. Iz orphan.

BARON. Mein Got, vat luck! und meselbs—Ich bin in America, und still mein veib ze vill nicht die.

*Enter—Left Second—*MRS. HUNTON.

MRS. HUNTON (*to COUNT and BARON*). Oh, here you are! We missed you from the ball-room.

COUNT. Ah, Madam, Madam, ze light of ze room go out. It come here. So ve too, ve follow.

MRS. HUNTON. Ah, Count you are very complimentary!

COUNT. No compliment—ze verité.

MRS. HUNTON. You like our American ladies then?

COUNT. Like?—Oh, no, not like! Ze Anglo-Saxon like! Ze Latin,—he love, oh, he love!

MRS. HUNTON. You love your own people, perhaps, but hardly Americans, I fear.

COUNT. Oui, oui, oui, more zan all ze Americaine! Zey have all ze school! Zey get—vat you call education—zey all know zo mooch!

MRS. HUNTON. Yes, our young women are educated. That is a fact; and, on the whole, better, I think, than those of Europe; but our young men—

COUNT. Oh, zay know ze business!

MRS. HUNTON. And not much else? Oh, do not protest! I see that is what you mean. It is very unfortunate; and no wonder some of our young girls prefer you foreigners.

COUNT. You fine zat out—no vonder, no. Ze American man, he vork, vork, vork. He go home. He sleep, sleep, sleep, all ze night. Not ze European. He vork shust a leetle. He go home. He spend ze evening wiz ze ladee. He studee ze ladee.

MRS. HUNTON. And so he comes to understand her, you think.

COUNT. Oui, Madam, of course. He come to understand her—altogeder.

BARON. Und dat is—vat you zay—necessaire.

COUNT. Mon Dieu! No vun can know vat he has not studee. Ze lawyer, he muss studee ze law; ze physician, he muss studee ze physique; ze shentleman, he muss studee ze ladee.

MRS. HUNTON. I see. You are very scientific, Count.

COUNT. No, no, madam. Not zientific. No shentleman can understand ze ladee who understand not ze art. Ze lady's vords, zay be art; ze ladee's dress, zay be art; ze ladee herself zay be art; and art, ah, ze art iz—vat you say—all in all.

MRS. HUNTON. Ah, Count, you do know how to compliment!

COUNT. No, no; no compliment! I do but know to zay zat vich iz verité.

MRS. HUNTON. A great thing to know, too, Count! The trouble with our American men is that they too often fail in this. Some of them, even when they admire us very much—

COUNT. Oh, zay cannot keep from zat, madam!—

MRS. HUNTON. Seem unable to let us know the fact.

BARON. Ist recht, madam ist recht. Ich habe das bemerked. Deir manier ist—vat you call—it shock, it shock.

MRS. HUNTON. Yes, I can imagine that that would be the case with people accustomed to the society of Europe.

BARON. Yes, day hab not enough—vat you call it—slip, slip, slip.

MRS. HUNTON. Smoothness, I suppose you mean.

COUNT. Oui, madam. A ladee, vous connait—is like a leetle cat. You smoothe her, and zhe follow, zhe do vat you zay. But if you slap, if you scratch, if you zay scat, zay no like you; zay no follow.

MRS. HUNTON. Why, this is a new idea to me! You European gentlemen seem to have turned the business of pleasing the other sex into a veritable art!

COUNT. Certainement, madam. Vat zould you have? It iz ze very highest art.

MRS. HUNTON. I see; I see. No wonder you are so agreeable to us. I had not recognized the reason before.

BARON. Oh, no; de Amerikaner he vould neber dink ob dat.

MRS. HUNTON. Perhaps that is the reason why we have so many unhappy marriages in our country.

COUNT. Of course, of course, madam. Ven a man know how to get, he know how to keep ze ladee.

BARON. Mein Got, und de Amerikaner, dey all haben zo viel—vat you call—zo viel devorce.

COUNT. And in Europe, eet is not necessaire.

*Exit—Left Center—*MRS. HUNTON.

BARON. Nein. Ve gets along vidout it.

Exit—Left Center—COUNT and BARON.

Enter—Left Second—LAURA and MR. HUNTON.

LAURA. What one likes or dislikes, father, depends at times, less on another's tendencies than on one's own temperament.

MR. HUNTON. Yes, my dear, I fear so.

LAURA. Why say fear?

MR. HUNTON. I fear anything that makes a rational being act irrationally.

LAURA. It is not irrational—is it?—to follow one's own tastes?

MR. HUNTON. Yes, when they prompt one to forget other people's traits. Temperament appeals to us through the body, tendencies through the mind. A rational being ought first to heed the latter.

LAURA. There is very little appeal to mind in ordinary society.

MR. HUNTON. Precisely.

LAURA. That is why you object to it?

MR. HUNTON. I don't object to it. Why should I? What good would that do? We are all members of it, and have to be. I object merely to the tyranny of society,—to its crushing out individuality. I object to its expecting everybody to become its slave.

LAURA. But you are always saying that one must accommodate herself to her surroundings.

MR. HUNTON. Yes; but not annihilate herself. The truth is that almost everything in the world of pure quality and permanent value has its source in the motives and opinions, not of people in general, but of certain persons in particular. In human as in vegetable life—in the leaf and flower, for instance—development—all that makes for progress and reform—is a process of unfolding that which comes from within the individual. This is the natural way, and, so far as one can judge from nature, God's way. Society seeks to change all this,—to dictate from without not only our modes of dressing and addressing, but of thinking and feeling. If the method of influencing the mind from within be of God, that which seeks to influence it from without is more likely than anything else to be of the devil.

LAURA. You want me then to act differently from others in society?—to be eccentric?—to ostracize myself?

MR. HUNTON. No; not necessarily. One has to live in the world of society. But even there he can bear about with him a consciousness of living, too, in another world,—the inner world of mind; and whenever the laws of the two worlds conflict—they by no means always do—then he can remember that it is his first duty to obey the law from within.

LAURA. I suppose you are right; but do you expect a girl of my age to be able to live like a philosopher, and go through a process of argumentation every time that I have to do anything?

MR. HUNTON. All the minds in the world have to go through something of that process, Laura. If not, they have not attained rationality, which is the one thing that separates a human being from a brute.

LAURA. And if they have not attained it?

MR. HUNTON. To speak plainly, I fail to see why—metaphorically, at least—they shouldn't go to the devil—either in this world or in the next, and probably in both.

LAURA. I wish you could make Winifred feel that. As I was saying, I think she likes Count Caveer's traits no better than I do; yet she certainly seems to be flattered by his attentions and seems to be tempted—if I may put it so—by his temperament.

MR. HUNTON. I thought that Bernard was her favorite.

LAURA. He used to be; and he himself, and Winifred besides, may both imagine it to be so yet; but mother's influence is very great, you know.

MR. HUNTON. Of course, and ought to be.

LAURA. Of course!—Winifred is her own daughter and not yours, and not my sister; but I do wish mother would be more careful about the company she makes us keep.

*Enter—Left Center—*MRS. HUNTON.

MRS. HUNTON (*to* LAURA). Laura, I wish you would go into the ball-room and speak to Winifred. I couldn't do it myself without exciting observation. I want to remind her that she must pay more attention to our foreign guests. She has gone off again into the alcove with Bernard.

LAURA. Certainly.

*Exit—Left Center—*LAURA.

MRS. HUNTON (*to* MR. HUNTON). I think I shall never ask that Bernard Baylor into our house another time.

(*She sits down, as also* MR. HUNTON.)

MR. HUNTON. Why, what a notion, my dear! We must invite him for the sake of his parents.

MRS. HUNTON. To tell the truth, they furnish one of the chief reasons why I prefer not to invite him.

MR. HUNTON. Strange statement! You know they are among the oldest—and perhaps the very best friends—that I have in the world. I never could have got through college, you remember, but for Mr. Baylor.

MRS. HUNTON. You paid him back for it.

MR. HUNTON. For the money, yes—years later, when I had plenty of it; but not for the kindness that, without hope of being paid, furnished the money just when I needed it.

MRS. HUNTON. He did no more for you than he would have done for the son of any other of his clergymen. You make a personal matter toward yourself of what had no personal bearing.

MR. HUNTON. Possibly; and yet I feel the obligation; and, more than that, I feel that I ought to feel it, and to express it.

MRS. HUNTON. You can speak for yourself. I feel no sense of obligation; and, if I did, I should feel a deeper sense of obligation to my own family.

MR. HUNTON. Why not express both?

MRS. HUNTON. What if the two conflict?

MR. HUNTON. How can they?

MRS. HUNTON. You are sometimes as blind as a bat. You never have noticed that Bernard is trying to get Winifred to fall in love with him?

MR. HUNTON. Yes, I have; and had hoped that he would succeed.

MRS. HUNTON. Think how preposterous and presuming!—a mere clerk!

MR. HUNTON. Most of us Americans start as clerks. *He* is a remarkably good one. By-and-by, too, he will inherit more or less,—at least enough to make himself comfortable.

MRS. HUNTON. And that is all that you plan for Winifred? Why, if we only exercise a little common discretion, she can marry into the diplomatic set.

MR. HUNTON. And you, her mother, want that?—want her to run the risk of being obliged to live perpetually away from you in some foreign country?

MRS. HUNTON. But if we, if you, if the whole family, get into the diplomatic service?—

MR. HUNTON. We may not get there; and, if we do, the appointments that we receive may merely serve to separate us further.

MRS. HUNTON. Well, I, for one, would be willing to risk that for the sake of my daughter's success.

MR. HUNTON. What success?

MRS. HUNTON. Social success.

MR. HUNTON. In a daughter, I should care more for personal success.

MRS. HUNTON. Same thing!

MR. HUNTON. Oh, no!—The same difference that there is between foreign and domestic. One depends on the state outside, the other on the state inside. A woman is happier, I think, when she has domestic success.

MRS. HUNTON. I fail to see the connection of thought.

MR. HUNTON. That consideration ought not to trouble one who is seeking a foreign marriage for an American girl. The one thing

that she is sure to do is to break off with the thought to which she has been trained in her own land too late to form connection with the thought to which another has been trained in another land. She is most likely to remain through life a stranger in a strange country.

MRS. HUNTON. But she has her own husband.

MR. HUNTON. Not always—in the sense in which most American girls have their husbands. I tell you, my dear, if Winifred were my daughter, I should be extremely thankful to have her get a chance to marry a clever, energetic, clean American clerk like Bernard Baylor.

MRS. HUNTON. You have so little ambition! I sometimes wonder that you have got along as well as you have.

MR. HUNTON. A man who is always content to climb, never gets along as fast as one who risks an occasional jump; but he is much less likely to miss his aim and fall. Really, my dear, I wish you could manage to head off Bernard, if you must, without bringing in his parents.

MRS. HUNTON. You may be sure that I shall not bring them in. I have already done my best to leave them out.

MR. HUNTON. What do you mean?

MRS. HUNTON. If you want to know, I will tell you. I met Mrs. Baylor in an elevator, the other day, and looked her straight in the face, and failed to recognize her.

MR. HUNTON. Why! Do you suppose she thought it was intended?

MRS. HUNTON. Possibly—possibly not. You know I have not met her very often. But, at least, she must have inferred this,—that she had made little impression upon me as one likely to prove valuable as a society asset.

MR. HUNTON. I am very sorry, my dear! Why should you act that way?

MRS. HUNTON. You are always talking about being truthful. Why should I not be truthful to her? Why should I pretend that I wish her society?

MR. HUNTON. And why do you not wish it?

MRS. HUNTON. Partly because of her son; partly because of the other people who come here.

MR. HUNTON. But the Bayers are intelligent, public spirited, well connected, well enough off.

MRS. HUNTON. So are plenty of others. But if you want to be "of the few," you must take care to let people know that you are not "of the many."

MR. HUNTON. Is that the reason why you have taken lately to these new departures?—bridge parties, late dances, Sunday lunches?

MRS. HUNTON. You have guessed it.

MR. HUNTON. And those are things I suppose to which the Bayers might object?

MRS. HUNTON. You have guessed it again. The problem is not very difficult.

MR. HUNTON. It seems to me that when a train is in danger of going too fast, it is not wholly wise to throw all the brakemen overboard.

MRS. HUNTON. What is your application?

MR. HUNTON. If anywhere in the world people need to use their nights, and, at least, one day in the week, for rest, it's in America.

MRS. HUNTON. I didn't know that you were so much of a Puritan.

MR. HUNTON. Not a Puritan, a patriot. If I can say that, a good many others can say the same,—right-minded people, too. And if you start out to repel even a few right-minded people, you may end by attracting a few who are wrong-minded.

MRS. HUNTON. And for fear of them, you would be willing to have us drift out of the current of society, and be left high and dry like a boat stranded on a sand-bank?

MR. HUNTON. Oh, that can be prevented in other ways! Most fish that I know of can be caught by bait. Throw overboard enough to keep busy the mouths that are opening to you, and though you seem some distance from the general current, it may prove more difficult to keep out of society than to get into it.

MRS. HUNTON. You can't be intimate with people without adopting their general ways.

MR. HUNTON. You are talking now about adopting foreign ways?

MRS. HUNTON. Yes.

MR. HUNTON. Do foreigners determine our diplomatic appointments?

MRS. HUNTON. Those are most apt to get them who show that they know how to adapt themselves to foreign requirements.

MR. HUNTON. I suppose a man then is to fit himself to represent America abroad by showing how un-American he can be at home.

MRS. HUNTON. You know—you have seen our foreign representatives.

MR. HUNTON. Yes. I congratulate you upon the logical workings of your mind. At the same time, it seems to me better, in the long run, to be cordial to everybody.

MRS. HUNTON. Why so?

MR. HUNTON. Because everybody's opinion of us, using the phrase in one sense, doesn't need to wait very long, nor change very much, in order to become everybody's opinion of us in another and more general sense.

MRS. HUNTON. You want me to welcome everybody, eh?—One can't have all sorts of people coming to her house.

MR. HUNTON. No danger of that—with some of the other people you have coming here. If anybody needs to be snubbed, why not let *them* attend to the matter? Why foul your own nest? Leave your dirty work, as the Turks do in the streets of Constantinople, to the dogs that delight to bark and bite.

MRS. HUNTON. You are complimentary to our guests.

MR. HUNTON. No; truthful and sensible. Let those that want to show their own superiority by exhibiting their ability to hurt the feelings, if not the fortunes, of others, hurt one another, not us. (*A noise, as of people disputing, is heard.*) They are making a good deal of noise in there. It may be necessary for you to float your social purposes with an unlimited flow of champagne, but it has its dangers. I hear Grady, too.

MRS. HUNTON. He is my son, not yours.

MR. HUNTON. I know; but you ought to pardon me for taking an interest in him.

MRS. HUNTON. He is of an age when he ought to be learning the ways of society.

MR. HUNTON. He seems to be doing it.

Enter—Left Center—LAURA.

(*MRS. and MR. HUNTON rise.*)

MRS. HUNTON (*to LAURA*). Did you do my errand, Laura; and succeed?

LAURA. Yes.

MRS. HUNTON. I must be getting back. Follow me soon, please. None of us ought to stay away too long.

Exit—Left Center—MRS. HUNTON.

MR. HUNTON (*to LAURA*). What's the matter, Laura?

LAURA (*evidently slightly angry*). Am not partial to the gentlemen in there.

MR. HUNTON. You differ in that regard from your mother.

LAURA. She may not be as proud as I am.

MR. HUNTON. As proud?

LAURA. As proud—too proud to feel flattered by being expected to sit on the footstool of foreign nobility.

MR. HUNTON. Were any of them rude to you?

LAURA. Less rude to me than to themselves. They were willing to appear coarse.

MR. HUNTON. A discriminating remark, Laura! To demean oneself is to be mean to oneself. If mean to himself one will not treat others any better, when the occasion offers.

LAURA. I am glad that you confirm my judgment, father.

MR. HUNTON. I am glad that my daughter has a judgment that can be confirmed. The worst disrespect that a man can show a woman is to lose, in her presence, his own self-respect. Her influence upon his nature is never what she ought to aim for, unless she is

appealing to him as an ideal; and an ideal is never appealing to a man, except as it is stimulating him to appear at his best.

LAURA. I wish Winifred could see these men as I do. I am troubled about her.

MR. HUNTON. Do you think any of them were drunk?

LAURA. It might be charitable, I suppose, to think that they were.

*Enter—Left Center—*BERNARD.

MR. HUNTON (*to* BERNARD). You have been driven out, too?

BERNARD. Too?

MR. HUNTON (*pointing to* LAURA). Here is one, and you are two.

BERNARD. Oh, she is *one* is she! I thought she might be from the way I saw Count Caveer making up to her.

LAURA. No; I am not *won* in that sense.

BERNARD. What an impudent set they are, anyway?

MR. HUNTON. Oh, their customs, you know, are different from ours! They talk about things that we shouldn't mention.

LAURA. I should think so!

BERNARD. It is not only that. They act like a set of students in a college-town boarding-house. They are away from home, and feel that they are not responsible if they fail to keep up the home-standard of respectability.

LAURA. That makes it hard for some of us who are expected to feel complimented when made their victims.

MR. HUNTON. I am mainly anxious that none of us should be made their permanent victims. I hope that Winifred—

BERNARD. Oh, there is no danger of that! Have no fear for her. She knows better.

MR. HUNTON. I think, Laura, your mother may have been right about one thing. I ought, I suppose, to face the music in there. Besides, I am a little curious.

*Exit—Left Second—*MR. HUNTON.

LAURA (*to* BERNARD). You really think there is no danger in Winifred's case?

BERNARD. Why, no. How could there be?

LAURA. She has not yet told her mother about you, you know?—and I think it may be a long time before she does do it.

BERNARD. And you think her mother is trying to buy up one of these fellows for her?—Outrageous!

LAURA. You know her mother is very ambitious.

BERNARD. Ambitious?—What has that to do with it? These creatures would take any old thing that had the money. She wouldn't think Winifred a success merely because getting ahead of somebody in that way, would she?

LAURA. The trouble is that a foreign decoration on a man's breast has the same effect upon some people as a disk made to glitter by a hypnotizer.

BERNARD. It's very kind of you to give me the hint—but—why, it's absurd!—impossible to believe! Oh, no, no. If things come to a crisis, I shall simply let our engagement be known.

LAURA. I should hardly advise you to do that.

BERNARD. Why not?

LAURA. You might be forbidden the house altogether.

BERNARD. A mother would never interfere—would she?—with what she actually knew to be necessary to her daughter's happiness? Besides, you know yourself—we are a little young—but there is no valid objection to me. My father is one of Mr. Hunton's oldest friends; and I—well, what can anybody say against me—my character, my position, my prospects?

LAURA. They can say one thing,—you have no title.

BERNARD. People of sense know enough to prefer a gold cup without a handle to a pewter cup with a handle.

LAURA. What an egotistical boy you are?

BERNARD. Am I?

LAURA. No; but you are very American.

Enter—Left Center—WINIFRED and GRADY.

BERNARD (*to* WINIFRED). I was just thinking that you would probably be out here soon.

WINIFRED. Yes; the air is getting rather close in there.

LAURA. I thought some other things were getting rather close. (*To Grady.*) You look, too, as if you needed a little fresh air.

GRADY (*evidently intoxicated*). Yes, I—I—you see father wasn't around, and I—I—you see I had to play host—drink health—awfully sick those people!—need a lot of health!—need it over and over again!—worse than a hospital!

LAURA (*to* BERNARD). Why, how dreadful! I never saw him this way before.

BERNARD. I hope you never will again. His experience in good society seems to have been too much for him.

GRADY. Yes, just so—have too much of a good thing.

WINIFRED (*to* BERNARD). What do you do with people when they act like that?

BERNARD. A good many of us, like the bad Levite, are inclined to let them alone; to act like the good Samaritan, we ought to find a sofa somewhere.

WINIFRED (*pointing to the Right Second*). There is one in here.

BERNARD. If we can put him on it, I think we can get him to sleep.

LAURA (*aside to* BERNARD). When a man becomes unconscientious, the best thing you can do for him—eh?—is to make him unconscious.

BERNARD (*forcing his right fist into his left hand as if to knock someone down*). Yes, precisely.

*Exit—Right Second—*BERNARD, WINIFRED and GRADY.

*Enter—Left Center—*COUNT.

COUNT (*to LAURA, just as she is about to exit at Right Second*). Ah, Mademoiselle Hunton, I vas looking for—but—vun star is zo bright as ze ozer.

LAURA (*turning to COUNT*). Oh, no, Count. Stars differ in brightness. But I can see that there is one thing that should make them seem alike to you. When you see stars, it is apt to be night all around them.

COUNT. You dink it is night ven I come?

LAURA. Why, certainly! We should not have these lamps lit, if it were not night.

COUNT. And I zhould not have me dream.

LAURA. Not have that?—Is it so unpleasant then for you to be confined to reality?

COUNT. Oh, Mademoiselle, how excessivement poetique! All zat Mademoiselle zay is von zymbol.

LAURA. Oh, no; not at all. I am very practical. I say always what I think. You imagine that I don't talk sense?

COUNT. Sense is ze mattere vich everybodee comprehens.

LAURA. That depends upon who hears it, not so. Some people are very difficult to make comprehend anything.

COUNT. You Americaine be very strange.

LAURA. Of course, we seem strange to strangers.

COUNT (*in a leering, insinuating way*). I did hope zat I vas make beginning to be mooch more zan a stranger.

LAURA. Yes, you are—more than an ordinary stranger.

COUNT. I am glad zhat you not zink me ordinary.

LAURA. Oh, no; not at all! I think you extraordinary.

COUNT. Quel flatteree! Ze Americaine have ze most original vay of zaying vat zay zay. Ah, sometimes—oui, vraitment, I zink zat I never can come vare I can comprehend zem.

LAURA. I hardly see how you could, Count, with your temperament, and tastes, and training. You ought not to expect to comprehend anything that is not common.

*Exeunt—Left Second—*LAURA and the COUNT.

*Enter—Right Second—*WINIFRED and BERNARD.

WINIFRED (*to BERNARD*). Lawrence is the best possible kind of a servant, you know. Grady will have all the care he needs. Will he sleep through the whole evening, do you think?—I hope so.

BERNARD. So do I. I am very sorry for you all. Of course, it was

an accident. He had no conception what sort of stuff he was taking.

WINIFRED. He should have known it. Mother told him. Father, you know, objected to having it so strong; but, of course, mother had to do as everybody else does.

BERNARD. Had to?—I hardly see that.

WINIFRED. Why, what a strange idea?

BERNARD. If more people had strange ideas, fewer would have wrong ones.

WINIFRED. Would you expect a lady to do differently from other people?

BERNARD. Why not?—When all the ladies get the suffrage do you expect them—or the most of them—to vote exactly as everybody else does?

WINIFRED. Humph!—That would depend—

BERNARD. According to you, not on themselves, but on other people. I think you women ought to show a little more independence.

WINIFRED. But not—as mother says—of society.

BERNARD. If you did, I suppose society might let you alone. But when we are married, Winifred, I shall have you, and you will have me. It's an argument for our getting married soon. Then you would never be alone. We two would always be together.

WINIFRED. And that would furnish all the society that I, at least, should want.

BERNARD. I hope so, Winifred.

*Enter—Left Center—*MRS. HUNTON.

MRS. HUNTON. (*to* WINIFRED). There is something I have to say to you, Winifred. (*To* BERNARD) Excuse us, please.

BERNARD. Certainly.

*Exit—Left Center—*BERNARD.

MRS. HUNTON. You have forgotten yourself again, Winifred. This man ought to know enough not to take you away from the rest of the company. It makes you seem impolite to them,—almost rude.

WINIFRED. Bernard didn't bring me here. I came with Grady,—to get him away from people.

MRS. HUNTON. With Grady?—Why should you want to get him away?

WINIFRED. He was not himself. He had been drinking too much.

MRS. HUNTON. What did you do with him?

WINIFRED. Put him into the smoking room. He is asleep there now on the sofa.

MRS. HUNTON (*moving toward Right Second Entrance*). I'll—

WINIFRED. No need of that! We left Lawrence with him, and you might wake him.

MRS. HUNTON. Did Laura see you take him in there?

WINIFRED. Yes.

MRS. HUNTON. What did she say?

WINIFRED. Nothing, I think; but, of course, she looked very much as the rest of us did.

MRS. HUNTON. I am sorry she saw him. You know, one of these days, she is going to have about all her father's money. It was left her by her own mother. We ought, if possible, to keep it in the family; and I have thought, if Grady—

WINIFRED. Oh, Laura would never take Grady, or anybody else unless she liked him!

MRS. HUNTON. I know. She is very stubborn. But I have thought that she did like him.

WINIFRED. I am not so sure. There is no doubt, though, about his liking her.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, Grady would like anybody that we wanted him to like.

WINIFRED. That is the trouble. Laura recognizes the trait; and I am afraid that, in her estimation, it rather cheapens his endearments.

MRS. HUNTON. It's strange that the most amiable people are the very ones that you girls seem to like least!

WINIFRED. There is a good reason for it. We want to have people like us not on account of their own good traits, but on account of ours.

Enter—Left Second—MR. HUNTON.

MRS. HUNTON (*not noticing him*). Well, we must do what we can about the matter, Winifred; and we should never forget that, whatever people may feel or think, nothing is ever done in this world except as a result of will. This will may be that of the person who feels or thinks, or that of other surrounding persons. If we want to be really successful in life, we must ourselves become these other persons.

MR. HUNTON (*to MRS. HUNTON*). Who are you talking about influencing in that way?

MRS. HUNTON (*ignoring the question*). Winifred, you would better go into the other room. They need you there.

Exit—Left Center—WINIFRED.

(*To MR. HUNTON.*) You seem to have a chronic objection to a woman's thinking a little for herself.

MR. HUNTON. No; I merely object to her thinking entirely for others. Really, you should be more cautious. Young people ought not to get into their heads the idea that everybody can be managed.

MRS. HUNTON. Why not?

MR. HUNTON. Mainly because it's not true. You convey a false impression. It is about easy to blow a feather down a boy's throat when he himself keeps blowing as to get a thought into his mind when he himself keeps thinking.

MRS. HUNTON. Yes; except when he stops to breathe!

MR. HUNTON. And then you can enter in, I suppose, and take possession. Do you remember what the Bible calls those that take possession of other people's minds. It calls them devils.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, the Bible!

MR. HUNTON. Wise old book, nevertheless! The truth is that when we try to influence others irrespective of their own thinking, we very soon begin to lose respect for their thinking, and, not only so, but for our *own* thinking, and for any kind of thinking. As soon as a man does that, he begins to disregard thought and to say and do what misrepresents it; in other words, to deceive. There is nothing in a woman that a man hates worse than deception.

MRS. HUNTON. Yes, if he find it out.

MR. HUNTON. Murder will out sometimes.

MRS. HUNTON. If I had some of your notions, I should never lift a finger to get into the diplomatic service.

MR. HUNTON. I sometimes wish, my dear, that you would never lift anything except a finger—not lift, that is, all your fingers, and your feet, too. We are in danger of going too fast and too far—even in the matter of expense.

MRS. HUNTON. Only for a year or two! When we have gained our object, we can retrench.

MR. HUNTON. Too suggestive of gambling, my dear! Besides, think of the expenditure of health and strength.

MRS. HUNTON. Merely because you want to go to bed early, you think everybody else should.

MR. HUNTON. Grady is young enough. Yet think how fearfully sleepy he is every morning. He ought to get to his office feeling refreshed.

MRS. HUNTON. The season lasts only a short time. We can rest in summer.

MR. HUNTON. Do you call the jig we kept dancing last summer, resting?

MRS. HUNTON. You should exercise a little imagination, and recall your own youth. The idea of denying our children the ordinary enjoyments of society!

MR. HUNTON. There it is again,—of society! Unless we take care it will, one of these days, be the death of some of us, if not of all of us.

Enter—Left Center—WINIFRED and the COUNT.

WINIFRED (*to* MRS. HUNTON). Oh, mother, Count Caveer has been asking me to go down Pennsylvania Avenue with him in his auto. You know, they have strung the whole way from Seventeenth Street to the Capitol with chains of electric lights. We shall not be gone more than half an hour. There is no objection, is there?

MRS. HUNTON (*to the* COUNT). Who else is going with you, Count?

COUNT (*evidently put out for a moment by the question*). Ah, Madam, ze party vill be very choisi—exclusif. Ze Baron Vanderstein and ze Baroness, zey vill go. I vill speak vid zem.

Exit—Left Center—the COUNT. Mrs. Hunton touches the electric bell.

MR. HUNTON. He had not asked them to go before?—He was expecting to go alone with Winifred?

MRS. HUNTON. Why, of course not! You should know enough for that. It is not customary in Europe. Why should he think of doing it here?

Enter—Left Second—FRITZY.

(*To* FRITZY.) Here, Fritzy, I want you to go and fetch Winifred's driving coat and hat.

Exit—Left Second—FRITZY.

Enter—Left Center—BERNARD.

BERNARD (*to* WINIFRED). I beg your pardon. May I speak to you a moment?

Exeunt—Left Second—BERNARD and WINIFRED.

MRS. HUNTON (*to* MR. HUNTON, *with a movement of the head toward* WINIFRED). What do you suppose he wants of her?

MR. HUNTON. I think that I can imagine.

MRS. HUNTON. Trying to persuade her not to go with the Count?

MR. HUNTON. That is what I should be doing, if I were he.

MRS. HUNTON. What business is it of his?

MR. HUNTON. He is her friend.

MRS. HUNTON. And what am I?

MR. HUNTON. He may know of things that you do not know.
Count Caveer's reputation is not the very best.

MRS. HUNTON. But the Baron and Baroness are to go with them.

MR. HUNTON. Their reputation is not the very best.

MRS. HUNTON. They go with all the diplomatic set.

MR. HUNTON. I was talking about their reputation with Americans.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, you believe every bit of foolish gossip that you hear!

MR. HUNTON. It's no question of what I believe; but of what others believe.

MRS. HUNTON. They talk the same about all foreigners.

MR. HUNTON. Oh, no!

MRS. HUNTON. About most of them.

MR. HUNTON. No; not even of the most.

MRS. HUNTON. These people have been introduced into all the diplomatic set, and go with them. If we want to go in that set we must go with those that it goes with.

MR. HUNTON. Including the Count, I suppose.

MRS. HUNTON. He is one of the best connected men in Europe.

*Enter—Left Second—*BERNARD *and* WINIFRED. BERNARD *shakes hands with her, as if they had just made an agreement of some kind.*

*Exit—Left Second—*BERNARD.

WINIFRED (*to* MRS. HUNTON). Mother, I have changed my mind.
I don't want to go with the Count.

MRS. HUNTON. But you must, Winifred. It's too late to change now. You have promised.

WINIFRED. Not in so many words.

MRS. HUNTON. The same thing!

MR. HUNTON. Oh, let her back out of it if she wants to.

MRS. HUNTON. But what shall we tell the Count?

MR. HUNTON. Tell him the truth,—that you have changed your minds; say that you had forgotten, and that Winifred, in the delight of thinking of going with him, had forgotten that she ought not to leave here while the dance is going on—and really she oughtn't.

MRS. HUNTON. The Count would see through that reason. We should offend him.

WINIFRED. But, mother, I don't want to go.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, you musn't give way to mere whims, Winifred.

WINIFRED. They are not whims. You want me to do what is wrong; yes, you do. Please, please, do not force me to it. You have no conception what it means to me. Oh, I can't go, I can't.

Enter—Left Second—FRITZY with cloak and hat. MRS. HUNTON takes them, in order to put them on WINIFRED.

I will not put these things on. I will not. Father, father you must help me.

Enter—Left Center—the COUNT, BARON, and BARONESS.

MRS. HUNTON (*excitedly, and angrily, to WINIFRED*). I am ashamed of you, making such a baby of yourself. Here come the Count and Baron. Do the right thing, and not disgrace us all. (*To the COUNT.*) She was just getting ready, you see. It was so kind of you to think of her; and she expects to enjoy it so much. Take the Count's arm, my dear. You did not hear me—take the Count's arm.

Enter—Left Second—GRADY and LAWRENCE.

GRADY (*to his mother as she makes Winifred take the Count's arm*). What yer doin' with her?

MRS. HUNTON. She's going out with the Count and Baron for an automobile ride.

GRADY. This time o' night?—with such blamed scoundrels as that? —Not if I can help it.

MRS. HUNTON (*to LAWRENCE*). Take him away, Lawrence. (*To the COUNT.*) You must excuse him. He is not well tonight.

COUNT. No, madam,—is not goot. I zee.

GRADY. Oh, you go to hell, will you? What do you know about good?

GRADY *is removed.*

Exeunt—Left Second—GRADY and LAWRENCE.

MRS. HUNTON. Very sorry, very sorry. I know he will thank me in the morning for apologizing for him, which I do most sincerely.

COUNT. Zank you.

Exeunt—Right Center—the COUNT, WINIFRED, the BARON and the BARONESS.

Enter—Left Center—BERNARD.

BERNARD (*to MR. HUNTON*). I beg your pardon—did Miss Winifred go with the Count?

MRS. HUNTON (*to BERNARD*). Apparently, yes. And, pray, how does that fact concern you, Mr. Baylor?

BERNARD. She promised me not to go.

MRS. HUNTON. Promised you, eh?—and by what right did you ask her to make such a promise to you?

BERNARD. By the right of a gentleman to protect a lady. I had to act quickly, and I thought the quickest way of influencing you was to influence her.

MRS. HUNTON. And why should you seek to influence either of us?

BERNARD. You don't know this Count, Mrs. Hunton.

MRS. HUNTON. We know all the diplomatic set.

BERNARD. I hoped that you would agree with me, and say that you did not know him. I must bid you good evening, Mrs. Hunton. Good evening, Mr. Hunton. (*He bows stiffly*).

Exeunt—Right Center—Bernard.

MRS. HUNTON (*looking after him*). Oh, my! how mighty dignified we can be when we want to!

MR. HUNTON. Yes; our family seems to have given offense in both directions tonight.

MRS. HUNTON. And all about such a little thing!

MR. HUNTON. Usually little things bring the most unexpected trouble. There is nothing except air inside a rubber ball. But if you play with it too recklessly, it is more apt than anything of which I know to bound back and hit yourself.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

A Month Later.

SCENE: *The same as in Act I. It is evening again, and the lamps are lighted, and all the characters, except the servants, are in evening costume. The curtain rising reveals LAURA sitting in one of the chairs sewing on some small children's dresses.*

*Enter—Left Center—*BERNARD.

LAURA. Are you leaving already? It's early yet.

BERNARD. I have to be up early in the morning. I saw you sitting here, and came to ask you to take my place.

LAURA. Your place?—Oh, I can't do that.

BERNARD. Why not?

LAURA. I am busy.

BERNARD. What are you doing?

LAURA (*holding up a small child's dress*). Taking care of my family.

BERNARD. What family?

LAURA. My girls in the industrial schools at the settlement. They sew on these twice a week. The rest of the week I unmake and remake them. Then they take them home as their own products to their little brothers and sisters.

BERNARD. You like that sort of work?

LAURA. Anybody would who tried it. The trouble is to get one to try. You have all the pleasure of meeting the children, helping them, and being loved by them, and none of the responsibility.

BERNARD. Your play is work then.

LAURA. If you choose to put it so. I should think it more correct to say that my work is play.

BERNARD. A fine distinction! It's much the same with myself. My work is play. I like it much better than the play they are having in there.

LAURA. And I like you better for saying so.

BERNARD. You never play with them?

LAURA. Not their game.

BERNARD. Not for money, you mean?

LAURA. Yes.

BERNARD. Conscientious about it?

LAURA. My father is, at any rate.

BERNARD. Humph! the next best thing to having a personal conscience, I suppose, is having a parent's conscience,—especially if you believe in heredity. Is there much playing of their kind here?

LAURA. Oh, you know how it is when people once begin.

BERNARD. No; to confess the truth, I don't know. I never began—before tonight.

LAURA. And now you have left off?

BERNARD. I hope so.

LAURA. Too bad!

BERNARD. That I left off?

LAURA. No, not that! Father has been saying all along that the same conditions that would bring certain people to the house would drive others away. Does Winifred know why you are leaving?

BERNARD. Nobody knows it, I think. I got a glimpse of you out here; said I must leave, and that I would get you to take my place. She is coming now.

Enter—Left Center—WINIFRED, followed by MRS. HUNTON and GRADY.

WINIFRED (*to* BERNARD). I knew you could never get Laura in there. So you will have to come back yourself.

BERNARD. That doesn't necessarily follow, does it? As I said, I have to go home.

MRS. HUNTON. But you wouldn't break up our party?

BERNARD. Why should my leaving do that?—I had nothing to do with forming your party.

MRS. HUNTON. Why, Mr. Baylor!

BERNARD. You took me because someone else was absent. I came in accidentally.

MRS. HUNTON. But you did come in; and now (*seeing* BERNARD *hesitate*)—Oh, well, if you want to be eccentric—

BERNARD. Eccentric?—

WINIFRED. Everybody else in society seems to like to play.

BERNARD. Excuse me, not everybody. Here is Laura.

WINIFRED. Yes; some people are very economical.

BERNARD. I am one of them. I have to be.

MRS. HUNTON. You would lose very little—with ladies.

BERNARD. Perhaps not; but I might lose a great deal with gentlemen.

MRS. HUNTON. No need of your playing with them.

BERNARD. That is not what I mean. You will pardon me if I am frank with you. I am in business. In that, I have charge of money. I might have very little left to have charge of, if it were known that I was in the habit of playing with what I had.

WINIFRED. Nobody need find it out.

BERNARD. I shall see that nobody does find it out. The first thing that I do tomorrow will be to tell those for whom I work exactly what I have done tonight, and let them, for themselves, judge of the circumstances.

GRADY. And why should you do that?

BERNARD. So as not to seem a sneak, in case they learn of it from others.

GRADY. You mean to say that I am a sneak, then, because I play here once in a while?

BERNARD. I beg your pardon. I was thinking of myself. It never occurred to me to think of you.

GRADY. No; it seldom does occur to you to think of others. Let me tell you, however, that you have forgotten to do that thing once too often. (*Grady seems about to attack BERNARD. WINIFRED and LAURA go to him as if to prevent him.*)

BERNARD. Really, Grady, I am sorry to have you feel that way.

GRADY. Are you? You would better save your sorrow for yourself. I should be sorry if I had left behind me all that made me a gentleman. Accepting our hospitality here, to act as a spy and go away and blaggard us!

BERNARD. You put that rather strongly.

GRADY. It needs to be put strongly. It is just what you said.

Enter—Right Second—LAWRENCE.

BERNARD. No; not that.

Enter—Left Second—MR. HUNTON.

GRADY. You tell me I lie. You confounded cad, you. (*To LAWRENCE, as he points toward the Right Center Entrance.*) Show him out; kick him out, if necessary. We have had enough of him.

MR. HUNTON. Stand still, Lawrence. Bernard, wait a minute. (*To GRADY.*) You are drunk again, eh?

MRS. HUNTON (*to MR. HUNTON*). No, not drunk; but unusually sober.

GRADY (*with a threatening movement toward BERNARD*). This fellow has been insulting mother and sister; and swearing to go out and tell the world a lot of lies about us.

MR. HUNTON (*to BERNARD, who again makes a movement toward the Right Center Entrance*). Bernard, please remain a moment. (*To GRADY.*) Unless you can be quiet, I shall have the servants lock you up.

MRS. HUNTON. My son has a right to be in any room of my house that he chooses. He may be acting a little rashly; but Mr. Baylor knows that he has had abundant provocation.

MR. HUNTON. Is that your opinion, Bernard?

MRS. HUNTON (*to BERNARD*). You said that the very first thing that you would do tomorrow would be to tell your employers

what you had done,—I suppose that you would say what you had been tempted to do here.

BERNARD. I didn't use the word *here*, Mrs. Hunton; nor purpose to do anything that would compromise your house; or any one in it. I merely said that I should forestall misunderstanding and the disgrace that would follow upon discovery that I had been gambling by making an immediate confession of the fact to my employers.

MR. HUNTON (*to* BERNARD). They have been having you play for money here?

BERNARD. Yes.

MR. HUNTON. Then you are perfectly right. It's a man's first duty to preserve his own reputation and other's confidence.

MRS. HUNTON. And save himself at the expense of ruining all his friends, I suppose. That is generous.

MR. HUNTON. He's not going to mention you.

MRS. HUNTON. But everybody will know where he was tonight.

MR. HUNTON. Not unless your other guests in there let it be known.

WINIFRED. Oh, the other guests!—we are forgetting them!

MRS. HUNTON. Yes, you and Grady must go back there. They'll not need me, at present, you know.

WINIFRED (*to* BERNARD, *in a rather heartless way*). Excuse us, Bernard; sorry you are going. Good-bye.

(MR. HUNTON *looks at* GRADY, *as if he ought to be taken care of and not permitted to go back into the card-room.*)

MRS. HUNTON (*to* MR. HUNTON, *referring to* GRADY). Oh, he's all right! You are always so suspicious.

BERNARD (*to* MRS. and MR. HUNTON). I must be bidding you good evening. (*He shakes hands with* LAURA, *and bows to the others.*)

Exit—Right Center—Bernard.

Exit—Left Second—LAURA.

MRS. HUNTON. Good riddance! I hope that now he will keep away. He is one of the sort that it seems impossible to make understand the most emphatic kind of a snub.

MR. HUNTON. I hope, my dear, that you had not been urging him to continue the game after he had found out that you were playing for money.

MRS. HUNTON. It's my duty to continue to keep the majority of my guests entertained, is it not?

MR. HUNTON. Yes, when no harm is done by it. But it's hardly considerate—is it?—to try to get a young fellow to do what will ruin his business prospects?

MRS. HUNTON. His own look out!

MR. HUNTON. People that look out for themselves must do it, sometimes, at the expense of being considered unamiable. That price often seems too high. So they let others look out for them. Suppose these others tell them things that are not true,—tell them, for instance, as Laura has been told, that if they refuse to play they will lose their popularity, and even their standing, in good society.

MRS. HUNTON. Things that are not true! You talk that way because I am a woman. You wouldn't dare to say it to a man.

MR. HUNTON. I shouldn't need to say it, if he were a gentleman.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh!

MR. HUNTON. I know quite a number of gentlemen who gamble; but not one of them that wouldn't warn off a young fellow who wanted to play at the risk of losing his business situation.

MRS. HUNTON. What do men do at their clubs?

MR. HUNTON. At most of them of which I know they draw up by-laws forbidding gambling.

MRS. HUNTON. I have played for money myself at the Woodside Club.

MR. HUNTON. Yes; but it has lady-members. It would not do to have by-laws that would interfere with their pleasure.

MRS. HUNTON. I thought that you were a member of the Players' Club?

MR. HUNTON. I am! but do you think that the word player means the same as gambler? A player never *can* be the latter so long as he is inside that club house.

MRS. HUNTON. You mean to tell me that actors don't gamble?

MR. HUNTON. Oh, no; only that the majority of this particular set of actors have a sense of responsibility that prevents their allowing conditions that might induce others to gamble.

MRS. HUNTON. What do they do on Sundays, when you are not there?

MR. HUNTON. Oh, on that day, in that club, they are forbidden to play any games at all.

MRS. HUNTON. Do you suppose that I am taking what you say for truth? The idea!—Nothing to do on the only day they have for recreation!

MR. HUNTON. Plenty to do, my dear. The houses of their lady-friends on Fifth and Massachusetts Avenues are wide open; and they are not only welcomed there, they are allured to go to the devil there just as fast as they choose.

MRS. HUNTON. When I married you I thought you were a gentleman.

MR. HUNTON. And now?

MRS. HUNTON. If you have so poor an opinion of women, why did you marry one—or two for that matter?—why not marry a man?

MR. HUNTON. It was not the fashion; but, if things keep on as

they have been going, it may become so. One might be able to control an obstreperous boy!

MRS. HUNTON. What things keep on?

MRS. HUNTON. The processions that some of you women—but, thank God, not all of you nor the most of you—are leading.

MRS. HUNTON. Leading where?

MR. HUNTON. At the top and bottom of society, where, at both ends, our civilization seems going to rot.

MRS. HUNTON. I will not stand such insults,—just because I am a woman.

MR. HUNTON. It is not just because of that. As I said, there are plenty of women,—the vast majority of them—who are not of this kind. Why not try to be like them?

MRS. HUNTON. You would like to have me anything, I suppose, but what I am.

MR. HUNTON. Oh, my dear!—

MRS. HUNTON. When a man says “my dear” we all know what it means. He thinks the word necessary. He is trying to balance something that he knows to be unkind with something—a mere phrase in this case—that he thinks may seem the opposite.

MR. HUNTON. But, my dear—

MRS. HUNTON. There it is again!

MR. HUNTON. Can't you see that your ambition—largely for myself, I know all that—is leading you where you ought not to go?

MRS. HUNTON. We are only doing what other people do.

MR. HUNTON. Not all other people.

MRS. HUNTON. All society people.

MR. HUNTON. No; only some. I should say only a few.

MRS. HUNTON. You merely know your men-friends. You don't know what their wives do.

MR. HUNTON. A good many men have wives as considerate and sensible as themselves.

MRS. HUNTON. And you have not, I suppose.

MR. HUNTON (*taking her hands*). I have been talking very plainly. I acknowledge it. But I have my reasons. I wish that you would think them over.

Enter—Left Center—the COUNT and WINIFRED, both smoking cigarettes.

COUNT (*to MRS. HUNTON*). I am inconsolable, Madam. You do not play viz us.

MRS. HUNTON. You know when Mr. Baylor left, I became an odd number. I have no partner.

COUNT. You take my place, madam. You take my place.

MRS. HUNTON. Thank you, very kind of you, very kind! But I couldn't think of doing that. Perhaps, though, I should go in and explain.

MR. HUNTON (*to WINIFRED*). Winifred, I want to speak to you a moment.

Exeunt—Left Center—COUNT and MRS. HUNTON.

MR. HUNTON (*to WINIFRED*). No great loss, Winifred, without some little gain! You were not smoking when Bernard was here.

WINIFRED. Of course not!

MR. HUNTON. He would hardly have liked it, I suppose.

WINIFRED. No; he's very straight-laced.

MR. HUNTON. And the Count is not?

WINIFRED. Oh, he's a perfect gentleman.

MR. HUNTON. And Bernard is not?

WINIFRED. Why, not in the same way. You know Bernard is only an American. The Count belongs to one of the oldest families in Europe. All of them have been gentlemen for generations.

MR. HUNTON. Who told you that?

WINIFRED. Why—mother—everybody knows it.

MR. HUNTON. I didn't know it.

WINIFRED. But you—you are an American, and—

MR. HUNTON. So are you Winifred; and so is your mother.

WINIFRED. But you can read about the Count's family in books.

MR. HUNTON. Every family contains some black sheep. How do you know that he's not one?

WINIFRED. How do I know anything?—A man as kind as he is!

MR. HUNTON. Is it kind in him to get you to do things that Bernard wouldn't like.

WINIFRED. Why should everything I do be determined by what Bernard likes or dislikes?

MR. HUNTON. Because he's such a good fellow!—so fine grained!—such a clear complexion!—such white teeth!—Why, a moment ago, when he came in here, and was standing next to me, his breath was just as sweet, just as free from the smell of whiskey or tobacco, as a man always likes to find a girl's when he comes near her, and dreams that, possibly, in certain circumstances, he might dare to kiss her!

WINIFRED (*snatching the cigarette from her mouth and throwing it in the fireplace*). Bah! It's mean of you, all the same.

Enter—Left Center—COUNT and MRS. HUNTON.

COUNT. And you vill not, Madam?

MRS. HUNTON (*to COUNT*). No, I can not.

Enter—Left Center—GRADY, evidently irritated.

GRADY (*to* WINIFRED). Winifred, Winifred! Come back here, come back!—Excuse me, Count—(*to* WINIFRED) Why, you are breaking up the whole game!

WINIFRED (*to* COUNT). Yes, we should have thought of that; but the Count, you know—

MRS. HUNTON (*to* GRADY). Thought more of being polite for the sake of others, than of playing for his own sake.

Exeunt—Left Center—After bowing to MR. and MRS. HUNTON—the COUNT, WINIFRED, and GRADY.

MR. HUNTON (*to* MRS. HUNTON). I am sorry to see Grady so much interested in that sort of thing. He seems to forget for it almost everything else. I am afraid the life he's leading here is doing him no good.

MRS. HUNTON. No good?—when he's learning all about the ways of society?

MR. HUNTON. But there are other ways that he ought to learn,—those of business, for instance.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, that knowledge will come soon enough!

MR. HUNTON. A good deal of it is a kind of knowledge that does not come. It has to be acquired—and with effort.

MRS. HUNTON. No great need for him to acquire it!

MR. HUNTON. I am not so sure of it. If we have many more panics like this last, our securities may go down so far that, even by getting very low down ourselves, we may not be able to find them.

MRS. HUNTON. But they will go up again.

MR. HUNTON. Perhaps so; but I am afraid not before the time when your mortgages must be paid. However, I presume Winifred's money will help you through.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, but I can't take that!

MR. HUNTON. Not permanently, of course—only to bridge over the emergency; and, as the ultimate legatee, that's as much for her interest as for yours.

MRS. HUNTON. But we may not be able to take her money for anything.

MR. HUNTON. Not borrow it?

MRS. HUNTON. No.

MR. HUNTON. Why not?

MRS. HUNTON. I wasn't intending to tell you so soon; but you might as well know it. It may belong, when we want it, to another.

MR. HUNTON. Another?—What do you mean?

MRS. HUNTON. Count Caveer. He has asked to marry Winifred.

MR. HUNTON. And she has consented?

MRS. HUNTON. Not yet.

MR. HUNTON. How could you promise the money?

MRS. HUNTON. I am her guardian. It is in my hands.

MR. HUNTON. And you are going to give her money to Count Caveer?

MRS. HUNTON. Not that, of course! I am not a fool. I have merely told the Count the truth,—that, when she comes of age, as she does this fall, her money will be in her own hands.

MR. HUNTON. And when he marries her it will be put, according to the laws of his country, into his hands. He made sure of that before he asked for her, I suppose?

MRS. HUNTON. Of course! you know how they do abroad. That's the custom of their country.

MR. HUNTON. No reason why they should practice it in our country. How could you bargain about your own daughter in that way?

MRS. HUNTON. How could I?—Just like a man! How could I?—let my daughter make the most brilliant match of the season—a match that will make every society girl in the city jealous of her,—the only opportunity of the kind, probably, that she will ever have,—and you would have prevented it, I presume?

MR. HUNTON. Does Winifred love him?

MRS. HUNTON. How can I tell? How can she tell?—Nobody knows how a suit will fit till it has been tried on. Even then, especially if young, one may outgrow it. Young chickens have down; old chickens have feathers. The down feels smooth, the feathers may scratch. The chicken is the same, only it has become an old chicken.

MR. HUNTON. Men have in them what chickens have not,—minds and souls.

MRS. HUNTON. Have they?

MR. HUNTON. Some of them have, and know it. Others, who overlook the fact, discover it sometimes when it's too late.

MRS. HUNTON. And Winifred?

MR. HUNTON. She used to like Bernard.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, he's impossible.

MR. HUNTON. I wish you had said that of the Count. When people decide to marry, their temperaments and traits should be in substantial agreement. I see no chance of such a result in this case. I hope, before you urge the matter upon Winifred, you will take pains to let her know exactly what she's doing.

MRS. HUNTON. Certainly. I shall. I have told you that already. I shall let her know that she is going to make the most brilliant match of the season.

MR. HUNTON. Will she know it, or infer it from what her mother tells her?

MRS. HUNTON. What difference does that make?

MR. HUNTON. All the difference in the world,—the difference between acting as if she were blind, and as if she had eyes of her

own; as if she had a mere animal body, and as if she had human brains.

MRS. HUNTON. Why can you never be practical?

MR. HUNTON. Nothing in the world is quite so practically divine as mind; nothing so practically sacred as thought. You and I have no right to interfere with another's thought, in order to prevent a truthful expression of it.

MRS. HUNTON. I am afraid, in spite of your ambition, that you will never be really fitted for a foreign appointment.

MR. HUNTON. Why not?

MRS. HUNTON. What are ministers or ambassadors for, except to influence the thoughts of others,—just as you are constantly telling me that one should not do.

MR. HUNTON. No wise or permanently successful man tries to influence others against their own judgments or interests. The best ambassador is the one who best recognizes that the world is wide enough for all, and, therefore, that what is good for one is good for all.

(A sound of disputing voices is heard.)

Enter—Left Center—the COUNT and BARONESS.

MRS. HUNTON *(to COUNT)*. What seems to be the matter, Count?

COUNT. I not know. I do not hear. Zey make great noise. I do not zee. Zey make great floureesch.

Exeunt—Left Center—MRS and MR. HUNTON.

COUNT *(stretching his hand toward the BARONESS)*. Zhall I take it?

BARONESS *(exhibiting a playing card)*. Oh, no! I put it here *(putting the card inside her dress at the neck)*. Dey dare nicht inzult a ladee.

COUNT. No, no; not zese Americain.

BARONESS. Dey be nicht all like de Franzosen, Monsieur.

COUNT *(lifting both hands)*. No; ze heavens and ze earth, zay be merciful!

BARONESS. But ve muss be discrete.

Enter MR. and MRS. HUNTON, followed closely by the BARON, GRADY, WINIFRED and LAURA.

BARON *(to the COUNT and BARONESS)*. Mein Got, mein Got, I never zee solch folk. Zay ask me here. I come. I blay, and, ven ve blay und blay besser as demselbs, vy, den dey gets mad. Is vat de shicken do ven de oder shickens get de grain. Dey

peck, dey peck, dey peck, mein Got! I not like dis shicken coop, und vill nicht come again here into solch a house.

MR. HUNTON. What is it? (*To GRADY.*) Grady, what is the matter here?

GRADY. I hardly know myself. I happened to notice what I thought was cheating. (*Pointing to the BARON.*) He saw that I noticed it; and then he began to accuse me of cheating. I had a card in my hand. He snatched it away, and then said it was marked. He seemed to know, too, what the mark was. I told him so.

BARON (*to GRADY*). You inzult a shentlemen, a shentle lady, who go in ze palaces of Europe, everyvere. Dey come here to zis house—zis leetle house—und ven zee do not know vat mean deir hands, deir heads, deir eyes, shust as zee do not know vat mean deir vords, vy zee cry out no ladee, no shentleman. How know you voo is de ladee, voo is de shentleman?

GRADY. I said nothing of the kind. I said nothing at all. I only looked, and then you turned blackguard, and began to accuse me.

MRS. HUNTON. Grady, Grady, be careful, do not forget yourself.

BARON. But I zee de proof, I zee de proof.

GRADY. Where was it that you learned what was the thing you call the proof; and why was it the proof?

BARON. Mein Got, dat is von very old trick, dat. Everybody know dat.

GRADY. In Europe, perhaps, but not in this country. Here most people try to play fair.

BARON. Und zee zay vee do not? Meinselbs do not? Mein frau do not? De Count do not? No, no; I vill not—vat you say—I vill not stand it. I vill hab—vat you zay—a satisfaction. Here cumt mein cart (*handing his card to GRADY*).

GRADY (*taking the card and tearing it and throwing it into the fireplace*). And there it goes.

BARON. Den vill Ich hab mein oder revenge.

(*He puts his right hand into the pocket of his left coat-tail. GRADY evidently misinterprets the action, supposing that he is about to draw a pistol, and seizes and lifts a chair as if to strike the BARON with it. MR. HUNTON tries to prevent GRADY's purpose.*)

MRS. HUNTON (*to GRADY*). Grady, this has gone too far. Now let me speak. There has been some serious mistake here. GRADY evidently misunderstood some expression on someone's face—

GRADY. But mother—no, not that—

MRS. HUNTON (*to GRADY*). Will you keep quiet? (*Then, turning to the BARON.*) Baron, you thought, very naturally but without good reason, as Grady has tried to explain, that the Baroness had been insulted. It's no wonder that you should have re-

sented such an action. But now that Grady has denied any evil intention it seems to me that you ought to accept his apology and withdraw, on your side, anything that he seems to consider derogatory to himself.

GRADY. But, mother, you overlook this fact—

MRS. HUNTON. Will you hold your tongue? What do you say, Baron?

BARON. Of course, of course, madam, if dat be vat you zay—

MRS. HUNTON. It is the understanding, I am sure, of all of us.

(GRADY tries to speak but, by a gesture, his mother prevents him. She continues to the BARONESS.) And BARONESS, I hope that you will pardon any seeming offense.

BARONESS (with apparently offended dignity). Oh, Ich dank you, Madam, Ich dank you.

COUNT. Ze Baroness have to me been zaying how mooch ze regret zat ze do not better know ze admirable Americaine. Ze find ze Americaine zo sharp, zo quick. Sometimes zey find vat is done—vy, before it is done already!

(MRS. HUNTON laughs.)

COUNT. Oui, dat is very funny. Ze find it so.

MRS. HUNTON. We laugh because we are pleased, Count. Everybody likes to be appreciated.

COUNT. Ah, dare be zome people ve muss appreciate, or be very dull.

BARON. Ich dink ve muss gib a goot efening now.

LAURA (to MR. HUNTON). Is what they have failed to give hitherto.

MRS. HUNTON (to the BARON). Oh, please, do not think of going yet!—You do us injustice. I hope you have not been offended.

BARON. Ach, nein, nein!—ist nichts.

MRS. HUNTON. I hope you understood.

BARON. Ve hab une understanding togeder, ya.

LAURA (to MR. HUNTON). I should think they had.

COUNT. I muss go vid zem (confidentially to MRS. HUNTON). I vill zay zomething, I vill zay zomething.

MRS. HUNTON touches the electric button.

WINIFRED. Oh, but Count, you are not going yet? are you? so early?

COUNT (to WINIFRED). It is not so earlee. It vill come late.

WINIFRED. It is only eleven. We can play for an hour longer.

COUNT. For tonight, mademoiselle, ve muss.

WINIFRED. But you must remember your promise for Tuesday; and you, Baroness and Baron. We must have that rubber.

BARONESS. Ich dank alles. Goot evening. Goot evening.

Enter—Left Second—LAWRENCE.

BARON. Goot evening.

COUNT. Goot evening.

*Exeunt—Right Center—*LAWRENCE; and, after shaking hands with MRS. HUNTON and WINIFRED, the BARONESS, the BARON, and the COUNT.

(As they leave, GRADY makes a movement, as if kicking them from the house.)

WINIFRED *(observing him.)* That is in keeping with your whole performance this evening, Grady. I think it is as mean as anything that I ever saw you do; and that is saying a great deal.

MRS. HUNTON *(to GRADY)*. Yes; I am amazed at you. You have been drinking again.

MR. HUNTON. What was it you drank, Grady?—I think, this time, I will recommend it?

MRS. HUNTON *(to MR. HUNTON)*. What do you mean?

MR. HUNTON. Just what my words indicate. I don't like these people. I believe Grady was right about them.

WINIFRED. Right about them! One of the least right things of which I know is getting mad when playing a game, merely because some one else plays better than you do.

GRADY. That was not the trouble tonight.

MRS. HUNTON. No; the trouble was that they were guests in our house, and you insulted them. No wonder they left!

WINIFRED. And they may never come again. We may never again in the world have an opportunity of associating with people of that position.

LAURA. For my part, I don't see why we should want to associate with them.

WINIFRED. You really mean what you say?

LAURA. Of course.

WINIFRED. Well, of all the lack of appreciation, and ambition, and taste! I suppose if you were offered, tomorrow, the choice between a chariot and a hay cart, you would take the hay cart.

LAURA. It would depend entirely upon who was in it.

WINIFRED. Yes; and I suppose that you would prefer a lot of farmers and milkmaids.

LAURA. And what if I should?

WINIFRED. It would be because you had not learned any better; and now, when mother is giving us an opportunity to learn this, you don't know enough to avail yourself of it. Because some of these people, who have been in better society—don't forget to bear that in mind—better society than we have, show the results of the fact in our presence, Grady—and you, too, for that matter—know so little that you merely begin to growl and snap and bark at them, like a country cur, merely because he sees something that he never has seen before.

GRADY. Oh, I didn't bark. I didn't make a sound. I only looked.

MRS. HUNTON. You had no right to look—in the way in which you evidently did.

GRADY. How could I avoid it?—Do you know how much they have won from us during the last week?

MRS. HUNTON (*looking at GRADY anxiously and gesturing to him, at the same time, as if to warn him not to reveal the amount to* MR. HUNTON). I know how much we have won from them.

GRADY. How much?

MRS. HUNTON. A good deal of our standing in the diplomatic set.

GRADY. Oh, hell!

MRS. HUNTON. Grady. I am shocked at you! I will not hear such language, in my parlor, and in my presence!

GRADY. Why do you suggest it then?—Do you suppose it helps our standing anywhere to have people around who, when found out, accuse me of being a sneak and a thief?

MRS. HUNTON. You brought it on yourself.

MR. HUNTON. Exactly as a jewel, my dear, brings on a theft—by not refusing to let its own nature shine forth.

MRS. HUNTON. You are pretending to be very fond of Grady tonight.

MR. HUNTON. Grady is all right, my dear, except when he loses his head. (*To GRADY.*) How did you happen to keep it, this evening?

GRADY. To tell the truth, I suspected something.

MR. HUNTON. I wish you would always be suspecting something. It's worth while in this world, if you are going to live in it,—especially in the world that your mother thinks so much of.

MRS. HUNTON. You are very sweeping in your insinuations, Mr. Hunton. We have had in our house, this evening, people as well connected in Europe as any who ever visited America.

MR. HUNTON. What difference does that make?—Your train may have very fine silk in it. Does that fact keep it clean, in case you trail it in the mud.

MRS. HUNTON. Just what I said! You make the most sweeping kind of conclusions, just because you have a vague, unwarranted hint of a possibility in the case of one person.

GRADY. Not so fast, mother! I am inclined to think that more than one person was involved in it.

MR. HUNTON. You mean the Count?

WINIFRED. Oh, yes; he means the Count! The Count knows how to play a little better than he does, and so—

MR. HUNTON. Please now—I am talking to Grady. Do you mean the Count?

GRADY (*hesitating*). No, I suppose not, to tell the truth; but he would know enough to keep from being found out.

MRS. HUNTON. Why, Grady, you are insane,—to make such insinuations with reference to such people as that!

MR. HUNTON. Had you good reasons for suspecting the Baron, Grady?

MRS. HUNTON. Now, for heaven's sake, don't dignify the boy's foolishness by treating it seriously. You are always talking, too, about the danger of giving mental suggestions.

LAURA. I think if Grady has any reasons, he ought to be permitted to tell them.

MRS. HUNTON. You, too, Laura, eh?—Could anything be more exasperating? Here, for months, I have been working with all the strength of mind and money that I had to put into it to lift my husband and my children to that position of prominence and influence for which, in some regards, though not—I have often to confess it to myself—in all regards, we appear to be particularly fitted. Now, just when we seem to be upon the verge of accomplishing our object, you all turn against me (*the others apparently demur*). Yes, you do. And Grady here, just because of some trifling, petty, movements of the eye or hand, which, even in an American, none of us could understand, and, of course, not in a foreigner—

GRADY. Why, mother, movements like that are exactly the same among all people.

WINIFRED. Why, no, they are not. You heard—

GRADY. Yes, I heard what the Baron said; but I am afraid he was slightly prejudiced.

MRS. HUNTON. There it is again. You don't know enough to recognize a simple fact like that, when a man who has had a wide experience in the world calls your attention to it. I don't see what has gotten into you—all of you. Whatever you may think, it seems to me the simplest kind of a proposition that, whoever our guests are, we ought to treat them with a certain amount of courtesy.

GRADY. But suppose that they come here to get our money away from us?

MRS. HUNTON. Why, I have shown you that, even on that supposition, we get more from them than they from us.

GRADY. But should we let them cheat us?

MRS. HUNTON. Why do you call it cheating? You don't know it. It's merely their way of playing. People don't play the same way in every country.

GRADY. Oh, rot!

MR. HUNTON (*to* MRS. HUNTON). Really, my dear, you are going too far now—justifying dishonesty!

MRS. HUNTON. I am not justifying dishonesty. It is not dishonesty in them. You are trying to make these children mistrust

their mother's judgment. Oh, at times, I think the conditions are hopeless. Some of you will never know anything.

LAURA. I beg your pardon, mother. Grady may have seen more than you suspect. I was in the room at the time, and I, too, saw what he saw.

MRS. HUNTON. One would expect you to come to your father's aid.

MR. HUNTON. Suppose that she does, my dear; or even suppose both she and Grady are right! What harm is going to be done by our acknowledging it here, all alone by ourselves?

MRS. HUNTON. The same harm that comes to greasy soup-plates on a railway dining-table. They may slop over. Judging from past experience, exactly that is the danger in connection with any ideas gotten into your heads. If I had made tongues, I should have fastened them down with wires, like corks on champagne bottles.

LAURA. That would have been bad for your daughters, mother. In that case, think how few could have popped the question.

MRS. HUNTON. That wouldn't have abridged *your* experience very much, would it? Oh, it is too much for human endurance! Just when I had arranged matters so as to be sure of accomplishing my end,—an end, too, which all of you want, and need, a silly boy, like you, Grady, and a silly girl, like you, Laura, begins to stare like an idiot, and the whole arrangement goes for nothing. For all that I can do, you make me act as silly as yourselves. I am like a general on a battlefield who has arranged an ambush, and then hears some of his own soldiers gossiping and giggling.

LAURA. But, mother, I think people of that sort should be shown up. The idea of their coming here under the guise of friendship to fleece us!

MRS. HUNTON. Fleece us!—people of that sort?—You don't know what you are talking about.

LAURA. You surely must have noticed, last week, how troubled they seemed to be when they lost money.

MRS. HUNTON. It is just as the Baron said. You mistake the manners of these foreigners. With us, as soon as people become of age, they go into business, they cease to play. But those people,—they never cease to play. They continue to have the same feelings and thoughts about play that children have.

MR. HUNTON. Ah, that's the way you put it!

MRS. HUNTON. That's the way it is; and that's what I want you to see. I want this house to be a place in which the conditions of the Old World are recognized. (*To LAURA and WINIFRED.*) You know your father wants the Secretary of State to give him an appointment in the diplomatic service. In these days no one can expect such an appointment whose own surroundings, in his own home, fail to show the results of wide acquaintance and broad culture on the part of all his family. In fact, he is ap-

pointed almost as much on account of his wife and even of his children, as of himself. They, too, must show that they know the requirements of courtesy and discretion.

LAURA. It was discretion that some of us were thinking that we were in danger of not showing.

*Enter—Right Center—*BERNARD. (*He stands waiting before announcing his presence.*)

MRS. HUNTON. I will not have you talking to me—an older person in that way. It's enough to have been insulted in one evening by a man like that Bernard Baylor.

LAURA. I don't think that he meant to insult you; and if he really did, I don't believe he knows it yet.

MRS. HUNTON. He wouldn't have known how to insult, probably, and more than how not to insult. The fact is that the whole Baylor family are too common and too ignorant with reference to the requirements of society to be fit associates for anybody who wants to be or to do—what shall I say?—anything merely respectable. I wish your father had never known them, or had sense enough now, that they have ceased to be useful, to forget them.

LAURA (*seeing BERNARD, and pointing toward him, evidently very anxious that he should not overhear*). Stop, stop, please.

MR. HUNTON (*in a loud voice intended to drown out the voice of MRS. HUNTON*). Why, Bernard, you here again? Glad to see you. Come in, come in.

BERNARD (*evidently embarrassed at what he has overheard, and taking a letter from his pocket*). I beg your pardon. The servant said you were disengaged. I promised father, Mr. Hunton, to show you a letter that he received today. You were not in the room when I came; and I left so hurriedly that I forgot the matter.

MR. HUNTON (*stretching his hand out for the letter*). An important letter?

BERNARD. Yes, very—for father. He thought it might seem important, too, to you. He liked the way in which it was worded. It's from the President, who has nominated him for Assistant Secretary of State.

MR. HUNTON (*taking and reading the letter*). Secretary of State? Very complimentary, the way he speaks of your father's knowledge of men!—because—Oh yes, I see!—his chief work as Secretary will be making and examining recommendations for consular and diplomatic appointments.

ACT III.

A Year Later.

SCENE: *The same as in Acts I and II, except that the lamps are not lighted. All the characters are in morning costume. The rising curtain reveals MR. HUNTON seated near the table reading a newspaper.*

Enter—Left Second—LAURA wearing a hat and out-door cloak.

MR. HUNTON. If Winifred must go South for her health, her mother, I think, should go with her.

LAURA. Mother can't get away just now. She says she musn't leave her doctor.

MR. HUNTON. Large practice that doctor of hers has!

LAURA. Yes, all the society ladies go to him.

MR. HUNTON. All of them?

LAURA. Most of them.

MR. HUNTON. Humph!—is an expert in cramps, I suppose, which in women seem to be attributable about equally to what is put over the waist and feet, and to what is not put over the spine and shoulders. In the olden time, when a man married, he had to have a doctor of divinity around; now it seems to be a doctor of medicine. In a little while, as divorces multiply, I suppose it will be a doctor of laws.

LAURA. No other doctors?

MR. HUNTON. Oh, yes; when the end of our civilization comes, as it may, after a little, its story will have to be written. Then we shall need a doctor of literature.

LAURA. You are always criticizing something.

MR. HUNTON. There is always something to criticize.

LAURA. Mother says that, if you could only get that foreign appointment, and go where there is a good climate, we could take Winifred with us, and her title would be a great help.

MR. HUNTON. Yes,—more help there than here!

LAURA. You think that the fact of her being a countess hurts us here?

MR. HUNTON. You have read the newspaper comments.

LAURA. Mother says that everybody is not so ridiculously American.

MR. HUNTON. A good many, I fear, are sufficiently so to recognize that we have made a mistake in judgment. We have made it, too, with reference to foreigners. That fact is not a recommendation in a foreign representative. Besides, think of all the money your mother and Grady have lost at play.

LAURA. Nobody knows about that.

MR. HUNTON. We do. Bernard does.

LAURA. Do you suppose that he overheard what mother said about him and his family?

MR. HUNTON. No one can ever find that out. But I seemed on the eve of an appointment. Since then, I have not heard of it.

LAURA. But Bernard would not—

MR. HUNTON. He and his father would both do one thing—what they thought was best for the country.

LAURA. Mother always says she could afford to lose what she lost.

MR. HUNTON. In flush times, perhaps; but these are hard times. She has used up her ready cash and to obtain enough for current expenses, has been obliged to lock up her securities as collateral. At present prices, this means a very great loss in case any of them have to be sold.

LAURA. What has that to do with the foreign appointment?

MR. HUNTON. If one go abroad to associate with princes he should have enough money to be able to entertain them as they entertain him.

LAURA. The Government ought to give him a salary large enough for this.

MR. HUNTON. I am not so sure about it. Our people don't believe in a prince. Why should they be taxed to enable a few to live like one? Why not confine agents of this kind to those who are independently wealthy. This arrangement would accomplish several very important results,—save the general public from heavy taxation; levy an indirect tax on those able to bear it; provide a useful career for the inheritors of money who are often by no means lacking in brains, and rid many a town and city of the superfluous, not to say supercilious, presence of the women of their families.

*Enter—Right Center—*MRS. HUNTON. *She sits in one of the chairs.*

MRS. HUNTON (*in evident alarm*). The doctor has just left. He says that Winifred must go South. We ought not to delay a day, not an hour, if we can avoid it.

MR. HUNTON (*rising and evidently disturbed*). Very unfortunate! All my deposits and securities, you know, were with the trust company. Yesterday it suspended payment. I may get them in a month or two, perhaps—but just now it seems impossible.

MRS. HUNTON. We might mortgage something.

MR. HUNTON. No more mortgages for us. There has been too much shrinkage.

MRS. HUNTON. Our real estate is worth three times as much as the mortgages.

MR. HUNTON. It was, and it will be—if we can keep our creditors from foreclosing. Even that seems doubtful. Has Winifred

nothing left? Did the Count gamble away everything that she had?

MRS. HUNTON. Everything, I think. What a scoundrel!—and, after that, to abuse and leave her!—all manifestations of the same character!

LAURA (*evidently much interested*). You must excuse me. I have a letter that I must get into the mail-box for the next delivery.

*Exit—Right Center—*LAURA.

MRS. HUNTON. You wouldn't have thought that they would introduce such a man into American society.

MR. HUNTON. Who would introduce him?

MRS. HUNTON. The foreigners.

MR. HUNTON. Why not? You can't blame them. The Count and the Baron were well connected. There was no mistake or misrepresentation. Their credentials were correct.

MRS. HUNTON. But they were gamblers who came here to make money; and the Count to marry for money.

MR. HUNTON. What of that? He made no secret of it. He did it openly. The fact that a man spends a month or two at Monte Carlo every year; and, when he runs out of money, marries a girl who has it, never seems to taboo him in the least in American society. A few years ago I was at Aix-les-Bains. Every afternoon, at the Casino, in sight of everybody, a duke sat gambling behind a pile of gold as big as a rat-trap. At his side always sat a painted lady, known by everybody to be his mistress. What of that? Every evening, almost without exception, he was dining, usually in the very next room, with rich Americans who were invariably scrupulously careful to see that the fact was telegraphed to the Paris edition of the New York *Herald*. It was quite remarkable what pains they would take to let all the world know in what kind of society they were going. You can't blame foreigners for doing what they can to assist such people to continue to go in the same society. Why should they not assist them?—if that is supposed to be what we Americans want?

MRS. HUNTON. You mean to say that Europeans have no regard for character.

MR. HUNTON. Not that, no; but that they think—and rightly—that our people have no regard for it. When we get to the border of their social pool, we are like children on the banks of a fishing pond. Anything with scales satisfies the children. Anything that has a scaly glitter—and often the more scaly the better—satisfies us. We forget that the pool has different kinds of occupants, and that we might often make a better haul outside of it than in it.

MRS. HUNTON. If you thought that way, you should have told us beforehand.

MR. HUNTON. I tried to tell you as well as I could.

MRS. HUNTON. But you should have explained matters—to Winifred and to myself.

MR. HUNTON. I thought that I had done so.

MRS. HUNTON. You should have been more persistent and pronounced in your opposition.

MR. HUNTON. I am not sure that, with my nature, I could have been. Besides, though I knew that you were running a risk, how could even I myself be absolutely certain of any actual danger.

MRS. HUNTON. Anything would have been better than to have let Winifred do as she did.

MR. HUNTON. If we only could be assured now of her health—

MRS. HUNTON. Yes; I am afraid that he may have murdered as well as robbed her.

MR. HUNTON. Possibly, it was not all owing to him. She was very frail, you remember, when she married.

MRS. HUNTON. Yes, she had had a very hard season.

MR. HUNTON. A very hard one, yes—for a young girl like her!

Enter—Left Second—WINIFRED, looking very pale. She sits.

Ah, Winifred, how are you feeling today?

WINIFRED. Pretty well, but rather tired, you know.

MR. HUNTON. Very naturally, too! You had a trying time abroad; and then such a stormy passage home! One would expect you to be upset, even more than you are.

WINIFRED. It seems, though, as if I ought to be rested by this time. I used to feel so well, always, when I was here. I expected when I got back to feel so again.

MR. HUNTON. Perhaps you have not been out enough in the open air. You know how much you used to ride. I have to drive out to Rockville this afternoon. If you want, I will take you with me.

WINIFRED. Oh, thank you. That will be like old times.

MR. HUNTON. I will go and get through my morning's work then.

Exit—Right Second—MR. HUNTON.

WINIFRED (*to* MRS. HUNTON). That may be the trouble with me, mother. We used to have here so much going out and going on.

It's very strange that so few people have called since I returned.

MRS. HUNTON. They think that you are unwell, my dear. You know, in fact, you have been so.

WINIFRED. But that ought not to keep away old friends—old friends, say, like Bernard. Why even he has not been here! I had an idea that he would call the very first day.

MRS. HUNTON. To tell the truth, Bernard may feel a little embarrassed about calling. You know that you are still the wife of some one else.

WINIFRED. But I'm not going to be a wife long. I'm going to be divorced. Everybody knows that.

MRS. HUNTON. Tell me, Winifred, are you still particularly interested in Bernard?

WINIFRED. Why, certainly! How could I help it? I always was, you know.

MRS. HUNTON. I am glad of it. It might not be a bad arrangement. His father, you see, is Assistant Secretary of State. I understand that he makes most of the recommendations for foreign appointments, and that fact might be of great assistance to us.

WINIFRED. Of course it would be, and it will be. I feel that it will be. Everything will be all right again. Think of it, mother, all right again!

MRS. HUNTON. Yes; you will have become a Countess—

WINIFRED. And have gotten rid of the Count; and then have become an American again with an American husband!

MRS. HUNTON. You think that last possession particularly desirable?

WINIFRED. You wouldn't ask that, if you knew as much as I do about foreign husbands.

*Enter—Right Center—*LAURA, wearing her hat and cloak.

MRS. HUNTON (*to* LAURA). Winifred says she wants to go out in society more and have a livelier time.

LAURA. Of course, of course; but the truth is I want to go South for two or three months and escape the cold weather; and Winifred has been kind enough to say that she is willing to go with me.

*Enter—Right Second—*MR. HUNTON.

MRS. HUNTON. I doubt whether you can get the money for it, Laura.

LAURA. Oh, that's all right. I have the money.

MRS. HUNTON. You have the money?

LAURA. I have. Here it is (*taking from her pocketbook and exhibiting a large roll of bills. She returns the roll to the pocketbook and leaves the latter on the table.*)

MRS. HUNTON. Why do you carry so much money about with you?

LAURA. I need the cash—to pay for our return tickets, and for express checks while we are away. Strangers can't use personal checks, you know.

MRS. HUNTON. I thought that all your money was in that trust company—lost, or, at least, impossible to get at just now.

LAURA. No; I happened to keep a little in another place.

Enter—Right Center—LAWRENCE, with a card.

LAWRENCE. For the ladies. (*He hands the card to MRS. HUNTON.*)
MRS. HUNTON (*looking at the card, and addressing WINIFRED*).
Bernard is coming to see you, Winifred.

WINIFRED (*rising*). He is?—Oh, I must change my collar—arrange my hair!—You will help me, mother. (*MRS. HUNTON rises.*)

Exeunt—Left Second—WINIFRED and MRS. HUNTON.

MR. HUNTON (*to LAURA*). Where did you get that money, Laura?

LAURA. I borrowed it on my coal stock as collateral.

MR. HUNTON. But that has gone away down—is worth ten times less than it should be. What if you should not be able to pay when the time comes, and lose it?

LAURA. It would be worse—not so?—to lose Winifred? The doctor says she must be taken South immediately. As you couldn't get the money, I had to do it.

MR. HUNTON. Humph!—What do you think of Bernard's coming to see Winifred? (*to LAWRENCE*) You can show him in now.

Exit—Right Center—LAWRENCE.

LAURA. I asked him to do it. Seeing him may do her a great deal of good. When he comes in, you and I must be careful to leave them. They may make up.

MR. HUNTON. I am proud of you, Laura,—for more reasons than one. But I think, in the circumstances, a man like Bernard will never make up. For one, too, I think, if he did, it would be bad for both of them, as well as bad for others.

LAURA. But we ought not to try to prevent it.

MR. HUNTON. No need of our trying (*seeing BERNARD entering*).
However, he only asked for the ladies.

Exit—Left Second—MR. HUNTON.

Enter—Right Center—BERNARD.

LAURA (*to BERNARD*). Goodday, Bernard.

BERNARD. Goodday.

LAURA. It's so kind of you to call on Winifred!

BERNARD. Yes. Has she been very unwell?

LAURA. I think she has, poor girl,—had a great deal of trouble, you know, for one so young.

BERNARD. Must have had. Does she talk much about her experience?

LAURA. No; but, of course, you have heard that she's going to get a divorce.

BERNARD. Yes, so the papers say. I presume there will be no difficulty about it. The case is clear enough.

LAURA. Too clear, I fear. Very strange of her mother—allowing such a marriage!

BERNARD. Oh, no, not so very strange! The strange things in the world, I am beginning to think, are those that are the most sensible.

LAURA. You hardly believe, then, in common sense.

BERNARD. No; if sense were common, the devil would lose his kingdom.

LAURA. What do you mean?

BERNARD. Would lose his world. According to the Bible, you know, the world is the thing of which he is prince.

LAURA. Elected that, I suppose, by popular suffrage.

BERNARD. No; by popular sufferance,—the method of selecting rulers where people are governed not by constitutional codes but by constitutional cowardice.

LAURA. Your hope for those who have to inhabit the world seems rather a dismal one.

BERNARD. What do you take it to be?

LAURA. To get out of the devil's kingdom by dying.

BERNARD. Oh, no; one can sometimes find a foreigner *in* that kingdom and yet not *of* it, and then he can know by experience something of a holier subject and a higher state, even while he is living (*taking LAURA's hand*).

LAURA (*drawing her hand away*). Oh!

BERNARD. Don't owe me. You owe me nothing. It is I that owe you. I should like to spend the whole of the rest of my life in paying the debt. Will you let me?

LAURA. Wait, wait, Bernard,—at least till you have seen Winifred. After that, you may change your mind again. We all had hoped—

Enter—Left Second—WINIFRED and MRS. HUNTON.

Exit—Left Center—LAURA.

(WINIFRED *has a self-conscious air, as if expecting an easy triumph.*)

MRS. HUNTON. Ah, Mr. Baylor, how do you do?—We are very glad to see you.

WINIFRED. Very glad, indeed.

(*All sit.*)

MRS. HUNTON. Just as your card came in, Winifred happened to be saying that there were no friends like old friends. When people have been brought up together, they are like two trees that grow near each other in the same forest. You can hardly distinguish the branches and leaves of the one from those of its

neighbor. All seem to belong together. So with the thoughts, feelings, actions of these old friends. They can sympathize and help one another, as is impossible for those who have hitherto been strangers.

BERNARD. Yes.

MRS. HUNTON. Why, I have heard that even two flowers of the same kind—and it is true, too, of dogs—are not alike, if one be grown in New England and the other in Mexico.

BERNARD. No.

MRS. HUNTON. I understand that you have gone into the State Department to help your father.

BERNARD. Yes.

MRS. HUNTON. It must be very interesting work, and a very rare opportunity. These people in the diplomatic set bring with them an atmosphere of their own foreign country, and not only so, but of many other countries.

BERNARD. Yes.

MRS. HUNTON. And the effect is so unmistakable in its influence. Why, even a few months passed abroad, to one who has been admitted into the inner circles—one might say into the shechinah—of society there, imparts, a polish, an artistic taste, a method of thought and feeling,—indeed, one might say a general air of refinement and culture that nothing else can give.

BERNARD. So I have heard.

MRS. HUNTON. Mr. Hunton and myself have noticed this in Winifred.

WINIFRED. Oh, mother, please don't tell Bernard that I have changed!

MRS. HUNTON. Unconsciously, my dear, unconsciously—and all for the better! But, perhaps, as you intimate, I should leave him to find that out. (*Rising.*) So you will excuse me, Mr. Baylor. I suppose you think we society ladies have nothing to do; but, really, I keep very busy, very busy, indeed. You know to people in our position some one is always coming for guidance—to ask about little questions of precedence—different in our country from what they are abroad. If it be not the French Ambassadors then it is the British.—Of course, such things require a good deal of tact, and often time, in making explanations.

She rises, as do also BERNARD and WINIFRED. She bows to BERNARD.

*Exit—Left Second—*MRS. HUNTON.

WINIFRED *goes to* BERNARD. (*They are near the sofa.*)

BERNARD (*taking WINIFRED's hand*). I understand, Winifred, that you have had a very hard time. I am exceedingly sorry for you.

WINIFRED (*seating herself on the sofa in such a way that BERNARD is forced to sit beside her*). Thank you, you are very kind. Experience, I suppose, is necessary for some people before they can become wise.

BERNARD. Yes; it ought to make them wiser and better, too.

WINIFRED. Do you think so?—just what mother says. But I was almost afraid that you might not think it.

BERNARD. It accords with a law of life. Nothing that can come from the world, no matter how much it may irritate or hurt, can really injure or weaken a strong character. It acts like sand when it scratches a gem, giving it a finer polish.

WINIFRED. You are very flattering; but then, Bernard, you always were. You know there are some natures that act toward our own as flowers do toward bees. No matter how much we buzz about them, even though we sting them, once in a while, we never get back anything but sweetness. It was always so with you.

BERNARD. Always?

WINIFRED. It was really not my doing, you know, marrying the Count. I was drawn and driven into it.

BERNARD. But your father—

WINIFRED. Oh, he and Laura were opposed to it, of course! They are opposed to all foreigners. But neither of them is really a relative of mine.

BERNARD. How about Grady?

WINIFRED. Oh, poor, dear, Grady! He never had much actual influence with anybody I think. Do you see much of him now?

BERNARD. Not now.

WINIFRED. You used to be such friends.

BERNARD. Yes; and you and I used to be such friends.

WINIFRED. And we shall be again.

BERNARD. Yes, I hope so (*then noticing a decided familiarity in WINIFRED's looks and actions*); but, of course, in a different way.

WINIFRED. A different way?

BERNARD. Why, yes.

WINIFRED. Why so?

BERNARD. For one thing, you are married.

WINIFRED. I know—but—you must have heard of it. It's in all the papers—I am going to be divorced.

BERNARD. It is possible; yet you may not be.

WINIFRED. Everybody says that I shall be; and then, Bernard—think of it!—It will be just the same as it used to be.

BERNARD. You really think it can be.

WINIFRED. My feelings haven't changed toward you in the least, Bernard. I love you exactly as I did that evening when we sat here in the twilight, and you kissed me. (*She leans over against him.*)

BERNARD. I thank you, Winifred, but—really, you know—you are not yet divorced. You are still a wife, and have a husband.

WINIFRED. He will never know it; and you and I—Why should I not tell you?—You always said that there should be no secrets between us.

BERNARD. Not then, but now—

WINIFRED. There is nothing that I owe that man, Bernard. Why, it would be impossible, no matter what you imagined—if you imagined a monkey and a fiend both together, the one obsessed by the other—it would be impossible for you to conceive of such a man. Oh, how I hate him. And he knows it, too. I think the only reason why he let me come away was because he knew that, if I staid with him, I should poison him.

BERNARD. You ought not to talk that way, Winifred.

WINIFRED. Why not? I am telling the truth. You know I have asked myself so many times what it is that I have done,—why I couldn't have been permitted to live my life as others girls do,—why I should have been sent off from home—from you and Laura and all the rest of you—sent off with a devil and made to live in hell—and all, too, before I was dead.

BERNARD. Please, Winifred, you are exciting yourself.

WINIFRED. Exciting? No one can blame me for that, can he? No one can blame powder for exploding, can he?—when you take a match and scratch, and scratch, and scratch against it. Oh, Bernard, I am so glad that you have come to take me away from it all!

BERNARD. We shall all of us, Winifred, be only too glad to do anything that can make you forget the trouble. We can do it, too; and you will find it out. Only have a little faith and patience. Experiences like yours never last forever. They are like bad dreams. Sometimes, the very first hour after one wakes, one feels as well as if he had had no dream.

WINIFRED. It was a bad dream, Bernard; yes, it was a bad dream. When I am with you, I shall never have another one, shall I? *(She throws her arms about his neck.)*

BERNARD *(trying to remove her arms)*. Please, Winifred, please. Someone is coming.

WINIFRED. What of it? I am not afraid of anyone now—so long as I have you.

BERNARD. But—please—it might interfere with your divorce—if this were seen—and reported.

WINIFRED *(releasing him)*. Oh, is that so? Someone is always interfering with something.

Enter—Right Center—But not before he has seen her arms about his neck—POLICEMAN.

POLICEMAN. I beg your pardon.

BERNARD *(rising)* *(to POLICEMAN)*. What is it?

POLICEMAN. Is this the lady that lives here?

BERNARD. Miss Hunton, I suppose, you mean? You can give your message to me. Miss Hunton is the lady whom I expect to marry. (*This is said evidently as much to enlighten Winifred as to deceive the policeman. WINIFRED is evidently startled.*)

POLICEMAN. Oh, you—you will excuse me, please, for interrupting you. The servant told me to come right in,—that nobody was here.

BERNARD. You wanted to see Miss Hunton then?

POLICEMAN. Not her; but someone who was said to be the Countess Caveer.

(WINIFRED makes as if to speak, but BERNARD by a gesture stops her.)

BERNARD. What did you want of her? Perhaps I can do as well.

POLICEMAN. We arrested a man; and he said as how the Countess Caveer was his sister. He seemed to think that having her for a sister would let him off.

BERNARD. Was he intoxicated?

POLICEMAN. Yes; but the boss thought that if he had relatives with money they ought to be informed. They might want to go bail for him.

BERNARD. How much would be needed?

POLICEMAN. A good deal, I'm afraid. You see he hurt a man.

BERNARD. How so?

POLICEMAN. He knocked him down—were playing cards, and quarrelled.

BERNARD. Hurt him badly?

POLICEMAN. I'm afraid so—had to be taken to the hospital.

WINIFRED. And Grady taken to jail?—Oh, we must get him out at once. I shall go right away. Mother will go with me. (*Starting for the door at Left Second Entrance.*)

BERNARD (*detaining her*). Wait, wait, please. You and your mother should not appear in this case, and need not; no, nor your father, either. I can do all that is necessary. (*To POLICEMAN.*) You wait at the front door a moment. I will make arrangements and join you.

Exit—Right Center—POLICEMAN.

(BERNARD continues to WINIFRED.) Of course, I wanted to have him think you were Laura. If I only had the money with which to pay the bail, I could settle the matter at once without troubling any of the rest of you here.

WINIFRED (*taking LAURA'S pocketbook from the table*). Oh,—here's the money! You can use these (*handing him bills that she removes from it*). Take them, take them.

(BERNARD counts the bills, then looks sharply at the pocketbook.)

WINIFRED. Not enough you think?

BERNARD. Why, yes; but strange that you happened to have it on hand so! (*Examining the pocketbook again.*)

WINIFRED. Oh, you recognize the pocketbook. It's Laura's, yes; but the money in it she brought in this morning for me.

(BERNARD puts the money in his pocket.) You will be a brother to him, Bernard. Yes, I know you will.

*Exit—Right Center—*BERNARD.

(*Rushing toward Left Second Entrance, WINIFRED continues.*)
Mother, mother, mother!

Enter—Left Second—in haste, MRS. HUNTON.

MRS. HUNTON (*to WINIFRED*). What is it, my child. You seem excited.

*Enter—Left Second—*MR. HUNTON and LAURA, *who has removed her hat and cloak.*

WINIFRED (*to MRS. HUNTON*). So I am, and ought to be. Grady has been getting drunk again; and has knocked a man down.

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, how unfortunate!—how did you find it out?—Was the man hurt?

WINIFRED. A policeman was here, and told us. The man was taken to the hospital.

MRS. HUNTON. And where's Grady?

WINIFRED. That's it. They have locked him up in jail.

MRS. HUNTON. In jail? Grady? Grady?—We must do something about it right away.

WINIFRED. What Bernard said. He was here, you know—has gone to bail him out.

MRS. HUNTON. I must follow him. He will need the money.

WINIFRED. No; he said you must keep out of it. He has the money himself.

MR. HUNTON. People don't carry around with them money enough for that; nor do young men keep enough in their banks.

WINIFRED. No; but I gave it to him.

MR. HUNTON. You?

MRS. HUNTON. Where did you get it?

WINIFRED. I took Laura's money here. She left it on the table.

MR. HUNTON. But she got it for another purpose.

WINIFRED. Yes, but I knew that with her there could be no purpose more important than helping Grady.

(MR. HUNTON *evidently demurs at this and is about to say so; but is deterred by Laura, who gestures to him not to speak.* WINIFRED notices them.)

MR. HUNTON (*changing the tenor of his intended remark*). Yes, of course, of course. Laura would do anything to help any of the family.

WINIFRED. Why do you look so then? (To LAURA.) Have you broken off your engagement, Laura?

LAURA. I never was engaged to Grady.

WINIFRED. And now are you engaged to some one else? (To MR. HUNTON.) Is she, father?—Why not answer?—Do I know the man? Why, why, I remember now—Bernard recognized your pocketbook. Yes; and he told the policeman that he was going to marry—and marry you.

LAURA. I am not engaged to Bernard.

WINIFRED. I thought it was a lie. He told it, you know, to save me—to deceive the policeman when he saw us kissing each other. (LAURA *seems surprised*.) Ah, you don't like that! I see, I see. It is Bernard, then. You are in love with him. It's well that I came back when I did. You have been trying to get him?

MR. HUNTON. Come, come Winifred, no need of your quarreling about this now! When the times comes—it will not come until after you are divorced—Bernard will be the one to make the decision, and he will do as he chooses.

MRS. HUNTON. And Laura, I am sure, would never take him away from you.

WINIFRED. She couldn't take him away from me—if he loved me. Has he ever asked you, Laura, to marry him?

MR. HUNTON. Oh, now, Winifred! That's hardly a fair question, is it?

WINIFRED. Whether or not it is, you yourself have answered it. Yes, he has. I know what you mean. I suppose he wants to marry somebody. Most men do. But Laura has not accepted him. She is wise in that. She knows that I am the one that he really loves. Oh, you think that I am selfish, father; yes you do. I can see the thought in your eyes. But people have to be selfish sometimes—if merely to keep those that they love from misery. You know, Laura, that he never cared for you as he did for me. And yet you think (to LAURA and MR. HUNTON), both of you think—yes, you do—I can read a person's thoughts—You think that I ought to give him up. (To MRS. HUNTON.) But, mother, I musn't do it. I can't do it. It would kill me if I tried to do it. To marry him is the only hope that I have left for happiness in life. Without him, I should die, I should die. Oh, Laura, you must give him up to me. Say that you will. It is not too late. Say that you will. Do it for *his sake*. You

never can love him, as I do. Nobody ever loved anybody as I love him. Oh, Laura, father, you are both against me. I have no friends left.

MRS. HUNTON (*stretching out her hands to WINIFRED*). Why Winifred!

WINIFRED (*burying her face a moment in her mother's breast, then violently drawing back and flinging her mother aside*). No, no; I was talking of friends. You are not a friend. You are worse than the others. You are none of you friends. Ah, mother, why did you let me be born, if I was not to be permitted to live my life? What right had you to strangle my spirit that wanted to love? Yes, you did! (*Looking at LAURA.*) You, too?—I see; you are not jealous of me. You merely pity me. You know—all of you—you know my spirit has been strangled; and you (*looking at LAURA and MR. HUNTON*), you think no matter what I want—that now—as I am—Bernard wouldn't have me. No; No!—how could he? Who that is clean wants a rug that dirty feet have trampled on, and then kicked aside?

MR. HUNTON. Oh, please now, Winifred. You were not to blame. The marriage was not your fault. You were young. You didn't understand.

WINIFRED. Oh, it's not my fault that I am thinking of, not my fault; it's my foulness! Why, why, if I sent off a boy to act merely as a valet to a man like that, it would frighten me to think of the risk involved in having him come back into my house again; yet I, I,—think of it!—I have been that creature's wife! Ugh, the humiliation of it all! I should never dare to tell Bernard the truth. He would shrink away from me, loathe me; and if I failed to tell him the truth, he would find it out, he would know me to be a liar, and he would hate me! Oh, mother, mother, nothing in the world is quite so beautiful, so sweet, so life-inspiring, as is love when it first opens in the heart; but, oh, when it appears, it must be plucked by him for whom it ripens. If not, why, then, in a little time, it turns to rot, and, oh, the nastiness of it! the stench of it! and all the worse than uselessness of what might have had such value!

MRS. HUNTON. Oh, Winifred, calm yourself.

WINIFRED. Calm myself, calm myself! Calm the waters of a cataract that are boiling where they have struck the bottom.

(MRS. HUNTON *moves toward WINIFRED*.)

No; keep away, keep away! I have had too much already of your kind of help. Think what a fool I have been, and what a fiend must have been at work to make me so. You knew how I loved Bernard, and how he loved me. Yet you sneered, you scolded, you threatened, you lied, and, at last, you tore me from

him, and thrust me into the clutches of that—ugh!—the damnable work!

(WINIFRED gasps and grasps her heart. Her mother rushes toward her.)

Keep away, keep away!

MR. HUNTON *springs for the electric button, and touches it.* LAURA *rushes up to WINIFRED and takes her in her arms and leads her toward the Left Second Entrance where*

Enter—Left Second—FRITZY.

Exeunt—Left Second—LAURA and FRITZY leading WINIFRED.

(MRS. HUNTON *starts to follow them.*)

MR. HUNTON (*putting his hand upon her to detain her*). No, no; not yet. I should wait.

MRS. HUNTON. Did you hear what she said of me? She cursed me. Oh, my child, my child! I must go to her—to save her life—my life.

MR. HUNTON. It's better not to go just now, dear. She's very weak, you know; and is out of her head. People in that condition are never accountable. It's very common for them to think their best friends their worst enemies. Wait a little till the paroxysm is over. Laura will do all that's necessary.

Enter—Right Second—LAWRENCE.

MR. HUNTON (*to LAWRENCE*). Lawrence, you go for the doctor, at once. No; telephone—Dr. Smith. Tell him we need him immediately.

Exit—Right Second—LAWRENCE.

Enter—Right Center—BERNARD.

MR. HUNTON (*to BERNARD*). It was kind of you to take that matter in charge. Did you see Grady?

BERNARD. Yes.

MRS. HUNTON. He's not with you?

MR. HUNTON. Did they want more for his bail?

MRS. HUNTON. How is the man in the hospital?—Speak, speak—what is the matter?

(BERNARD *hesitates to answer.*)

BERNARD. I—

MRS. HUNTON (*to* BERNARD). What is it?—Have you nothing to say?

BERNARD. Yes; but—Mr. Hunton—it would be better to wait a little. I must have time.

MR. HUNTON (*to* MRS. HUNTON). Let him get his breath, my dear.

MRS. HUNTON. We should know at once. You had money for his bail, not so?

BERNARD. Yes.

MRS. HUNTON. Then why didn't Grady come with you?

BERNARD. He couldn't, just now.

MRS. HUNTON. Exactly like Grady! He has gone to see the man in the hospital. How is the man? Was he badly hurt?

BERNARD. Yes, very badly, I understand.

MR. HUNTON. He will not die?

BERNARD hangs his head.

MRS. HUNTON. What do you mean?—It can't be that he is dead?

BERNARD. Such is the report.

MRS. HUNTON (*in great distress*). Oh, God! and that means that Grady will be tried for murder! my Grady! Why, he was the gentlest, kindest creature that ever breathed. He never, when a boy, would harm a fly. It was all some mistake. I know it. (*To* MR. HUNTON.) Oh, Robert, you must go at once and tell them so—I, too. I will get my things and go with you.

MR. HUNTON. I will, my dear. We must see the boy, and cheer him up. (*To* BERNARD.) They would not allow him to leave on bail then?

MRS. HUNTON. They really think he killed the man?

MR. HUNTON. How much more did they demand. You should have told them I would raise any amount in reason.

BERNARD. Yes; I knew that. (*He drops his head and holds it on his breast.*)

MRS. HUNTON. What do you mean? Has anything happened to Grady?—I see. There has. Tell us, tell us right away—Speak, speak, why do you not? I—oh—I believe he must have hurt himself—be dead!—Is that so?—Is it?—What? How did he die?—You do not speak?—He killed himself, he did, I know he did. Oh, you need not tell us. Oh, my God!

(*She moves toward the Left Second Entrance. MR. HUNTON starts to follow her. She cries to him:*)

No, you need not follow. I must be alone, alone.

MR. HUNTON (*to* BERNARD). Is her surmise a true one?

BERNARD. Yes. He seems to have had a pistol with him; and shot himself.

MR. HUNTON. Poor boy. (*Then looking toward the Left Second Entrance.*) Poor mother, too!

Enter—Left Center—LAURA, weeping.

LAURA. Oh, father, Winifred has left us.

MR. HUNTON. Left?—how so?

LAURA. Just breathed her life away—almost the moment that her head had touched the pillow.

MR. HUNTON. We must be careful about breaking the news to your mother. I will find her at once (*turning toward Left Second*).

LAURA. She knows it. She was just going into the room as I left.

MR. HUNTON. You should have staid with her.

LAURA. She insisted upon my not doing it.

MR. HUNTON. It's terrible, terrible! Bernard was just telling us that Grady has shot himself—killed himself. I am afraid that this double sorrow will be more than your mother can bear.

(*A pistol shot is heard.*)

LAURA *rushes toward Left Second Entrance.*

MR. HUNTON (*to BERNARD*). Wait here, please. We may need you.

Exeunt—Left Second—LAURA and MR. HUNTON.

BERNARD *sits in a chair.*

Enter—Left Second—LAWRENCE.

BERNARD (*to LAWRENCE*). What seems to be the matter?

LAWRENCE. Matter enough, sir! The Countess is dead; and the mistress has shot herself!

BERNARD. Fatally?

LAWRENCE. It seems so, sir. I must telephone the doctor again.

Exit—Right Second—LAWRENCE.

Enter—Left Second—LAURA.

BERNARD (*rising to meet her*). The servant has told me. I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am for you. Is there anything that I can do to help you? Shall I stay with you?—

LAURA. Yes, father will need you very much, I think.

BERNARD. And you?

LAURA (*throwing her arms about his neck and weeping*). And I.

END.

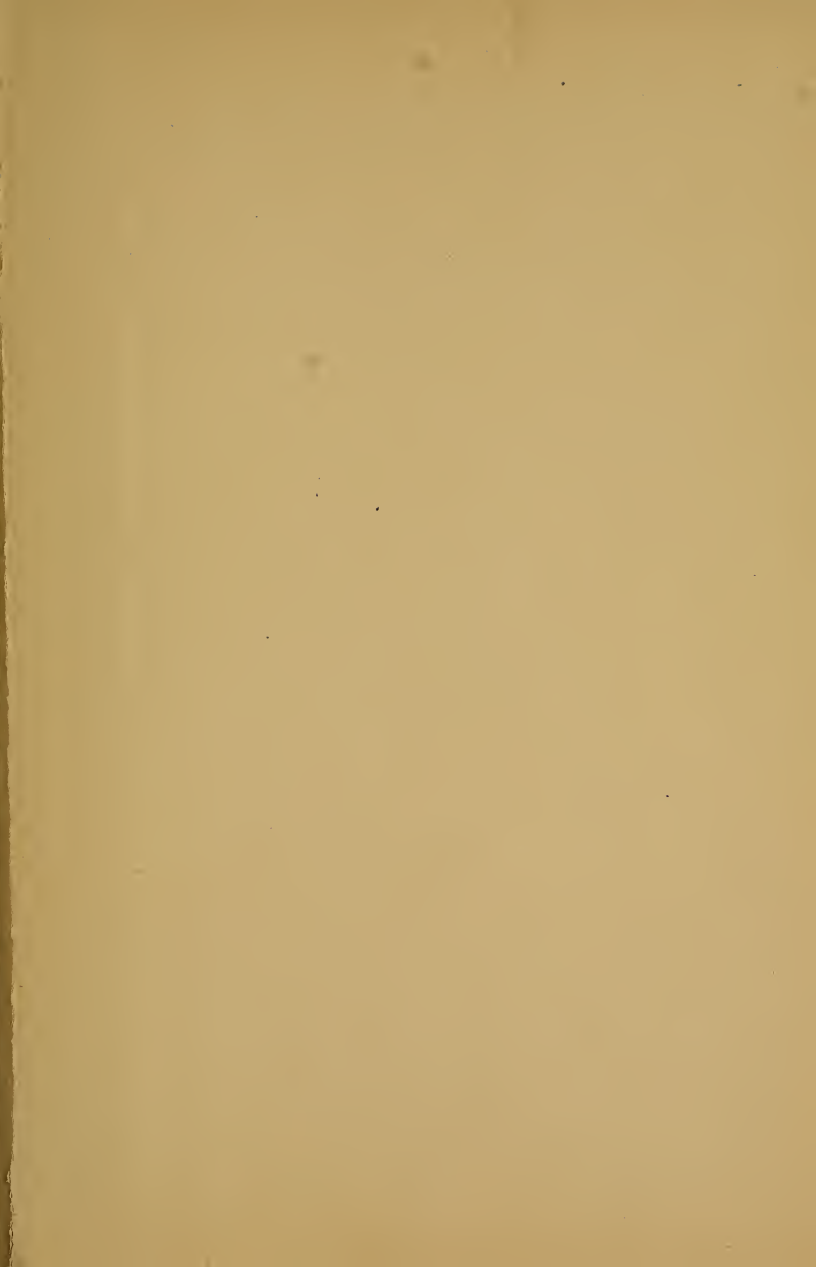
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